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The University of Southern Mississippi

RETURN TO HOLY HILL: LOUISIANA COLLEGE, ACADEMIC
FREEDOM, AND THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION'S
CONSERVATIVE RESURGENCE, 1995-2006

by

Joseph Learned Odenwald

Abstract of a Dissertation
Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

May 2015

ABSTRACT

RETURN TO HOLY HILL: LOUISIANA COLLEGE, ACADEMIC FREEDOM, AND THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION'S CONSERVATIVE RESURGENCE, 1995-2006

by Joseph Learned Odenwald

May 2015

This study examines a period in the history of Louisiana College in which the college's sponsoring organization, the Louisiana Baptist Convention, a Southern Baptist affiliate, began to insist that professors at the college teach only in accordance with the official views of the Southern Baptist Convention. The literature is replete with studies on the movement affecting the Southern Baptist seminaries, but little has been written about the impact of the Southern Baptist Convention's Conservative Resurgence on the colleges.

As such, this study explores the changes that were made to the academic freedom and governance policies as the trustees sought to return the college to what it was perceived to have been: a holy hill where the Bible was touted as inerrant and traditional values were prescribed.

Robert Lynn, who served as president from 1975-1996, led the college to adopt modern concepts of academic governance, and the college had a chapter of the American Association of University Professors. As his tenure was coming to an end, pressures from a conservative faction of the Louisiana Baptist Convention intensified. This led to the filing of a lawsuit by four faculty members for character defamation.

Lynn's successor, William Rory Lee, a Mississippi Baptist clergyman and experienced higher education administrator, arrived in 1997. Shortly afterward, the lawsuit was settled and a quiet period of five years ensued.

In 2002, the figures who pressured President Lynn during his waning years returned with similar demands. When President Lee and his vice-president for academic affairs resigned in early 2004, a divisive search for a new president commenced. In early 2005, chair of the teacher education department and inerrantist Joe Aguillard was narrowly selected as president. Over the next few years, academic freedom was redefined and faculty governance essentially eradicated.

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A Dissertation
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Approved:

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May 2015

DEDICATION

To my parents, thanks for always holding education in high regard and for supporting me in what has seemed to be a never ending academic career. To my grandfather, Big Big, thank you for your persistence that I become “Dr. Odenwald.” You cheered me on, more so on those nights when I was commuting to and from Hattiesburg. And you accompanied me when I surveyed Fred Downing’s private collection of materials that constitute the data used in this study. For that trip we took together, I am ever grateful.

To Laura, you came into my life right after the proposal defense and your beauty and the hope that I could share the rest of my life with you pushed me to close this chapter in anticipation of the next. Who you are and what you have experienced comprise all I long to be. I love you, and am grateful that your grandmother and I share in the Louisiana College legacy

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe much to the professors who taught me at Louisiana College, especially Dr. Fred Downing, Dr. James Heath, Dr. Carlton Winbery, and the late Dr. Connie Douglas. Their commitment to teaching and the liberal arts did much to move me beyond the simpleton philosophy that I possessed when I first ascended the Holy Hill. I expected to find confirmations of my beliefs and opinions. Instead, I was challenged to think beyond my worldview. As the faculty grappled with the threat to their academic freedom during my junior and senior years, I was inspired to devote my life to higher education. In many ways their loss was my gain, and thus what I have written serves to tell the story of those who gave so much to Louisiana College.

I am especially grateful for Robert Lynn, whose presidency and leadership are explored within the pages of this dissertation. He built the Louisiana College I inherited as a freshman in the fall of 2001. This work highlights his contributions, and I think fairly depicts him as a higher education administrator who believed in academic freedom and shared governance.

To Dr. O'Brien, Dr. Hill, Dr. Rachal, and Dr. Platt, thank you for the challenging curriculum and for working to make the higher education administration program stronger. Your contributions are akin to those who gave years of service to Louisiana College. I am especially grateful for you granting me the privilege of studying my passion: Louisiana College. Indeed that gesture is fitting given the topic of academic freedom.

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CHAPTER I
PURPOSE, JUSTIFICATION, METHODOLOGY,
AND CONTEXT OF LOUISIANA COLLEGE

Introduction

This study will describe a controversy at a small Baptist college in the Deep South named Louisiana College, affectionately referred to by some of its alumni as “Holy Hill.” The dispute was between Louisiana Baptist clergy and academicians and academic administrators at Louisiana College, and it took place from 1995 to 2006 and involved issues related to governance and academic freedom. In telling the story, I situate the struggle at Louisiana College within the larger context of Southern Baptist higher education since 1962.

The first half of this chapter explains this study’s purpose, its justification, and methodology. Terms used in the study are also defined in this section. The second part of this chapter attends to the context surrounding the conservative resurgence at Louisiana College. I explain the seeds of conflict in colonial higher education, changes in higher education’s purpose, the Southern Baptist reactions to modernism, and look at the seminaries which first experienced the suppression of academic freedom after the Conservative Resurgence. Then I outline the history of state Baptist Conventions and Colleges in the 1980s and the Baptist College Categories Since 1990. The chapter concludes with a look at Louisiana College and compares it to other Baptist college controversies in the 20th century.

Purpose Statement

A number of scholars, namely George Marsden, Mark Noll, and James Burtchaell, have chronicled the struggle between modernism and fundamentalism in the early part of the twentieth century, describing the positions assumed by various denominations. Their work provides a foundation for understanding the basis for some religious groups' rejection of modernism. Marsden describes the crisis that ensued around 1920 when an acceptable answer to research questions was no longer God.¹ In *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, Marsden posits that fundamentalism is a recurring theme within the twentieth century, emerging each time a new set of circumstances forces religious denominations to grapple with change.² Karen Armstrong concurs, suggesting that the progressive 1960s brought about a revival in Protestant fundamentalism not seen since the Scopes Trial in 1925.³

While there have been a number of studies that address the power struggles between Protestant conventions and denominational institutions of the same stripe in many places in the United States, less is known about their interactions in the Deep South. Like elsewhere in the United States, the impact of denominational bodies on the professional lives of academicians and academic administrators serving church-related institutions in the Deep South merits inquiry. This study, then, attempts to better understand these interactions and thus add to what we know about the politics of religious

¹ George M. Marsden, *The Soul of the American University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 8.

² George M. Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 2.

³ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Random House, 2001), 133.

higher education in the United States. Also this study hopes to inform administrative practice in the field of church-related academe as to the delicate nature of the relationship between contemporary religious bodies and their philosophies of education and academic freedom cherished by faculty members. The findings may offer a strategy for navigating the conflicts that arise between denominations and their sponsored colleges.

Justification

A number of scholars have explored fundamentalism's impact on the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC). Some have even described the struggles that ensued at the denomination's six affiliated seminaries as the conservative SBC leadership sought to reshape Baptist academia. Mark Noll discusses this in his work describing evangelicals' efforts at countering the changing culture via institutional and theological dogma.⁴ But in spite of the broad work on fundamentalism in America and the more specific work on fundamentalism and SBC seminaries, the literature is void of an extensive discussion of the SBC's Fundamentalism influence on its colleges.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following terms will be used with these definitions:

Baptist College: A college founded by or affiliated with a state Southern Baptist convention, usually offering an undergraduate liberal arts curriculum and in some cases, select professional graduate programs.⁵

⁴ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 111.

⁵ William Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* (Washington: Baker Academic, 2006), 28-29.

The Baptist Faith and Message 2000: The doctrinal statement of the Southern Baptist Convention. The document represents a statement that dates back to 1925, revived in 1963 and again in 1998 and 2000. Critics, many of them Southern Baptists, argue that the statement's emphasis on inerrancy and gender roles goes beyond the views typically held by many Southern Baptists.⁶

Conservative Resurgence: A political strategy adopted by conservative SBC pastors in the 1970s, culminating in the successive election of conservative presidents of the SBC, who used their appointment power to select like-minded trustees to govern the denomination's agencies.⁷

Deism: Belief in a religion that is inborn, natural. Deists often reject traditional religion while maintaining a belief in God. Deism is thought to have been the dominant religious philosophy of the founding fathers.⁸

Denominational (Protestant) College: A college founded by a Protestant denomination during the period just before or after the Civil War. The majority of these colleges were Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian.⁹

Evangelicalism: A brand of American Christianity that shares the doctrinal views

⁶ Douglas Blount and Keith Wooddel, *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000: Critical Issues in America's Largest Protestant Denomination* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), xiii-xxii.

⁷ Jerry Sutton, *The Baptist Reformation: The Conservative Resurgence in the Southern Baptist Convention* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2000), 1-4.

⁸ David Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 49-52.

⁹ William Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America*, 49.

of fundamentalism but has engaged with culture rather than withdrawing.¹⁰

Fundamentalism: A brand of American Christianity that is militant and at times separatist in its commitment to biblical inerrancy, traditional gender roles, and the divinity of Christ.¹¹

Historical-critical method: An analysis of biblical texts as having been shaped by the human author's culture, worldview, social status, and biases.¹²

Higher-criticism: A term related to the historical-critical method, referring to an approach to biblical texts that does not take what is read to be actual history, rather the ideas of a writer or community at a given time.¹³

Inerrancy: A view of the Bible that maintains it is without error in areas of history, science, and faith. It notes that while the Bible has human authors, they were guided by the Holy Spirit, thus the primary author is God himself.¹⁴

Judeo-Christian: A term that is often used by liberal or progressive Christians as a means of achieving ecumenical relations with Jewish Americans. The term was common in the post-World War II era, especially in Protestant colleges as the institutions reformed their religious perspectives.¹⁵

¹⁰ George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 2.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹² David Law, *Historical-Critical Method: A Guide for the Perplexed* (London: Continuum, 2012), 1-6.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴ Norman Geisler, *Inerrancy* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 2.

¹⁵ Gary North, *The Judeo-Christian Tradition: A Guide for the Perplexed* (Institute for Christian Economics, 1990), 1-7.

Liberal (Progressive) Christianity: A brand of Christianity formulated in the late nineteenth century, emphasizing ethics, sentiment, the sacredness of the individual, service to others, and the search for truth.¹⁶

Modernism: “The use of methods of modern science to find, state, and use the permanent and central values of inherited orthodoxy in meeting the needs of a modern world.”¹⁷

Pietism: A religious movement rooted in seventeenth century German Lutheranism, emphasizing personal holiness and spirituality. The movement was influential on American Protestantism in the nineteenth century and still influences evangelicals today.¹⁸

Pre-millennialism: A theology of the end of time, also known as eschatology, attributed to nineteenth century Anglican John Darby, which suggests that Jesus Christ will physically return to earth and rapture, and will remove true believers before years of chaos and destruction begin for those who have not accepted Jesus Christ as their savior.¹⁹

State (Southern Baptist) Convention: An affiliate of The Southern Baptist Convention which funnels monies from its supporting churches to the SBC.

¹⁶ Terry Lawrence, “Philosophy, Religion and Education American Style: A Literature Review,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 16 (2007): 243, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10656210701650377>.

¹⁷ Willard Gatewood, *Controversy in the Twenties: Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Evolution* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 10.

¹⁸ F. Ernest Stoeffler, *The Rise of Evangelical Pietism* (E.J. Brill, 1965), 8.

¹⁹ George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.), 9.

Social Gospel: A Liberal Christian movement attributed to nineteenth Baptist minister Walter Rauschenbusch who rejected biblical literalism and emphasized the gospel parables calling for social justice and caring for the poor.²⁰

Methods

Historical methods were employed in this study. What follows includes information related to the research objectives and a description of the historical methods used. Three primary research objectives will guide the design and conduct of the study:

1. Describe the trends at select Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries following the SBC's Conservative Resurgence.
2. Discuss the ways in which the resulting Louisiana College controversy mirrors the controversies at the six affiliated SBC seminaries in the 1980s.
3. Explore the changes in institutional mission and purpose, and culture at Louisiana College, including any impact on academic policies and governance.

The majority of the data in this study came from primary documents retained by those who were involved as faculty members during the struggle over the theological direction of Louisiana College. H. G. Good posited that one could study historical data related to education to understand contemporary problems in education.²¹ Similarly, Gary McCullough and William Richardson argue that educationists explore the past to

²⁰ Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Knox, 1945), 1-9.

²¹ H. G. Good, "Historical Research in Education," in *Educational Research Bulletin* 9 (1930): 7.

deal with present concerns.²² By studying historical data on Louisiana College, a Southern Baptist college, I aimed to understand some of the contemporary problems in Southern Baptist higher education generally, especially those involving governance and academic freedom.

Instrumentation

In order to address the research objectives, I used an historical organizational study in which the critical years of the conflict at Louisiana College over issues of educational models, methods, and governance and academic freedom were closely examined. Sharan Merriam posited that exploring a phenomenon over a period of time is necessary to provide a holistic analysis of an organization's history.²³ Merriam suggested that an historical organizational study uses observations, interviews, and a review of historical documents to arrive at conclusions about an organization's development or decline.²⁴

Anthony Brundage argues that in writing history one must guard against bias in both approaching the topic and in selecting evidence.²⁵ The writer should ask (1) what do I know of this subject and its significance; (2) what views do I have of the motives of the

²² Gary McCulloch and William Richardson, *Historical Research in Educational Settings* (Philadelphia, PA: Open University Press, 2000), 121.

²³ Sharan Merriam, "Introduction to Qualitative Research," in *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 6.

²⁴ Sharan Merriam, "Assessing and Evaluating Qualitative Research," in *Qualitative Research in Practice: Examples for Discussion and Analysis* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002), 21.

²⁵ Anthony Brundage, *Going to the Sources: A Guide to Historical Research* (Malda, MA: Wiley, 2002), 126.

major decision-makers; and (3) what influence did the events and people I will examine have on the history? Brundage suggests returning to these questions regularly during the research process to guard against looking for and seeing only evidence that bolsters preconceived notions. He further posits that one should avoid partiality in selecting evidence, especially primary documents, lest one approach the topic from an adversarial angle, amassing evidence that supports one's side. Because I have a close relationship to Louisiana College, great care was taken using Brundage's method to guard against bias.

In an effort to ensure the external and internal validity of the historical documents, a number of questions and issues were considered with each artifact. McCullough and Richardson suggest that great attention be given to (1) text, a document's authenticity, date, credibility, representativeness, and meaning; (2) author, who produced the document and for what purpose, and their association with the organization; (3) context, the reason for the production of the document and its relation to the issue; (4) audience, who it was intended for, broad or restricted; (5) influences, what effect the document had; (6) process, its origins and development; and (7) the interests, what caused its development.²⁶ Similarly, Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier offer an introduction to traditional source criticism. They suggest that the historian has three tasks when approaching a document: rendering it comprehensible; locating its place and time; and determining its authenticity.²⁷ Howell and Prevenier identify seven steps in source criticism: (1) determining the document's genealogy; (2) its genesis; (3) originality; (4)

²⁶ Gary McCullough and William Richardson, *Historical Research in Educational Settings*, 92.

²⁷ Martha Howell and Walter Prevenier, *From Reliable Sources: A Guide to Historical Research* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001), 64.

interpreting the document; (5) determining the author's authority; (6) competence; and (7) trustworthiness.²⁸

Context Surrounding the Conservative Resurgence at Louisiana College

The struggle for academic freedom in the United States has its roots in religious arguments. Timothy Cain, in *Establishing Academic Freedom: Politics, Principles, and the Development of Core Values*, chronicles the sectarian debates that often plagued faculty during the first half of the nineteenth century, but concedes that for the most part faculty in the era of the Protestant colleges did not pursue positions at colleges with which they disagreed theologically.²⁹ In fact, the primary issue to beleaguer faculty and presidents in the period leading up to the Civil War involved the abolition of slavery rather than the affirmation of creeds.³⁰ This changed when the German model of higher education, with its emphasis on the freedom to teach, inquire, and learn, began to influence college governance in the post-Civil War era. Cain denotes Darwinism as the creator of American academic freedom, as professors sought protection from those who demanded that state or church dollars not be used to employ those who subscribed to what was deemed an atheistic theory undermining the creation story.³¹

Scientists were not the only professors targeted. The integration of Darwinism into biblical interpretation led to a number of dismissals of university and college professors, mostly in the South but not just at the Protestant colleges. Cain cites the

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Timothy Cain, *Establishing Academic Freedom: Politics, Principles, and the Development of Core Values* (New York: Macmillan, 2012), 4.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 7.

example of Alexander Winchell, a professor of Old Testament at Vanderbilt University during the period the university was under the control of the Southern Methodist Church and its bishop, was terminated without comment in 1878 for his pamphlet that argued humans existed before Adam.³² James Woodrow was fired from the theological department at Columbia University for his evolutionist views.³³ Not surprising, most of the termination and censures, fourteen cases between 1879 and 1900, occurred at the Protestant colleges and seminaries.³⁴

The strife continued into the twentieth century as fundamentalists, led by William Bell Riley, a Baptist minister, founded a number of organizations devoted to opposing the teaching of evolution. At the first meeting of the World Christian Fundamentals Association, the group decried the atheism, infidelity, and anti-Christianity which the group believed was making inroads into higher education and pledged to support only colleges that adhered to biblical creation.³⁵

The evolution of academic freedom in Southern Baptist colleges can be characterized as having grown more permissive from the late 1950s through the 1970s, then becoming more restrictive from the 1980s to the present. A number of factors have determined the level of academic freedom granted faculty at one Baptist college or another. These include governance, specifically how much control a state Baptist convention has over the college, often a product of monetary support and influence on the

³² Ibid., 8.

³³ Ibid., 9.

³⁴ Ibid., 9.

³⁵ Ibid., 102.

board of trustees. Another factor is the level of academic programs the institution offers. The larger the college, the less control the state convention tends to demand. Yet another factor is the amount of academic governance designated to the faculty. In the case of Louisiana College, the faculty historically wielded great influence in academic matters.³⁶ This became a significant issue in the struggle over the college's definition of academic freedom.

For more than three decades now (1979-2014), other Southern Baptist institutions of higher education have undergone similar crises of academic freedom, with some of the colleges severing ties with the denomination and others aligning themselves more closely to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) and its doctrinal statement, *The Baptist Faith and Message 1963*, and later, *The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000*. Barry Hankins contends that the crises wrought at the institutions were the result of fundamentalist elements of a denomination reacting to the developing progressive American culture.³⁷ According to Karen Armstrong, this Protestant American fundamentalism was revived in

³⁶ The Louisiana Conservative Resurgency to the *The Baptist Message*, editorial titled "Covenant with Louisiana Baptists," May 1995, private collection. The Louisiana Conservative Resurgency was a band of Louisiana Baptist clergyman who believed in inerrancy and desired the Louisiana Baptist Convention to affirm it as a statement of faith and for Louisiana College faculty to teach in accordance with the doctrine. The group adopted a number of other names throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, including "Speaking the Truth in Love" and "The Louisiana Inerrancy Fellowship or LIF." In this "Covenant with Louisiana Baptists," the group offers four principles. Two of the four principles pertain to Louisiana College. The first requires that Louisiana College faculty and staff adhere to the doctrines of the Christian faith. The second calls for a process in which Louisiana Baptists can learn of how violations of the doctrines of the Christian faith by Louisiana College faculty and staff are remedied.

³⁷ Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2002), 8.

the 1960s and 1970s.³⁸ There have been implications for professors teaching in the denomination's closely affiliated colleges and seminaries in terms of their academic freedom and personal convictions.³⁹

Similar to the Louisiana College story, although not involving religion, is the story of the University of Nevada, chronicled by J. Dee Kille, in *Academic Freedom Imperiled: The McCarthy Era and the University of Nevada*. While the religious theme is absent, the clash of changing values and authoritarianism and the curbing of academic freedom that rocked the University of Nevada in the 1950s resembles the restrictions placed on faculty governance at Louisiana College beginning in 1995.⁴⁰ The setting for the University of Nevada in 1952 is one of great adaptation as the institution grappled with a changing student population of returning veterans of the Korean Conflict, McCarthyism, and a faculty losing much of the power previously afforded it under earlier administrations.⁴¹ The implications for the University of Nevada mirror those

³⁸ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Random House, 2001.)

³⁹ Lawanda Smith to William Simpson, October 11, 1995, private collection. Lawanda Smith was a faculty member in the department of English; William Simpson was a professor of history and the vice-chair of the faculty council and involved in the campus chapter of the AUUP. Lawanda Smith writes that she feels the need to offer her fears that the controversy plaguing Louisiana College resembles the one that ensued at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where she had spent the previous seven years studying for a master's and a doctorate in Christian education. Smith draws parallels between comments made by those calling for changes at Southern Seminary and those being made by the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency group.

⁴⁰ Louisiana College AAUP Chapter Executive Committee to members of the Louisiana College faculty, memorandum, June 30, 1995, private collection. In response to the Hyatt booklet, the group urges faculty members to join the AAUP chapter and engage in Louisiana Baptist politics.

⁴¹ J. Dee Kille, *Academic Freedom Imperiled: The McCarthy Era at The University of Nevada* (Reno, NE: The University of Nevada, Press, 2004), 1.

experienced at Louisiana College five decades later: censure by the American Association of University Professors and a decline in academic reputation.⁴²

According to Kille, Millard Stout, who assumed the presidency in 1952, was a hardnosed, direct figure who was brought in by the elected board of regents for the purpose of “cleaning things up.”⁴³ Ironically, similar things were said of Joe Aguillard when he became Louisiana College’s president in 2005.⁴⁴ Both the Millard and Aguillard presidencies were the result of governing bodies wanting to reinstate an older model of academic governance in an era in which other institutions were expanding the role of faculty in governance.⁴⁵ In the 1950s, Reno was a progressive and growing metropolitan area, but an amendment to the state constitution that conservatives in the Nevada State Senate passed meant that each county, irrespective of population, was guaranteed a senator.⁴⁶

The conservative leadership which was instrumental in hiring Stout grew at odds with the new faculty who brought with them the progressive ideas of shared governance they had become accustomed to at their previous institutions. The faculty was not alone

⁴² Ibid., 3.

⁴³ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁴ William Simpson to faculty council, December 28, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Simpson writes to inform the group that the presidential search committee of the board has resigned, and that a new committee will meet to recommend Joe Aguillard as president on January 3, 2005. Simpson requests a meeting at which time to take a vote of no-confidence in Aguillard as potential president of Louisiana College.

⁴⁵ J. Dee Kille, *Academic Freedom Imperiled: The McCarthy Era at The University of Nevada*, 8.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 9.

in its expectation for a voice in the direction of the university, as the veterans who comprised a growing percentage of the student population expected to have their input.⁴⁷

Stout's leadership model was top-down, steeped in his previous experience in secondary education and the military. Prior to assuming the presidency in Nevada he served as a commander in the Army and was headmaster of the lab school at The University of Minnesota.⁴⁸ While the faculty was immediately rattled by Stout's modus, his hierarchical model of the employer-employee relationship was supported by the citizenry around the state.⁴⁹ He also garnered support when he revitalized the subpar athletic program and touted his corporate model that eliminated almost all committees as simpler.⁵⁰ Stout succeeded in relaxing the entrance requirements, which he said was to make a University of Nevada education more accessible.⁵¹

Joe Aguillard also spent most of his career in secondary education, serving as superintendent of a rural public school district before becoming a faculty member at Louisiana College.⁵² Like Stout's, Aguillard's administration was authoritarian.⁵³ And

⁴⁷J. Dee Kille, *Academic Freedom Imperiled: The McCarthy Era at The University of Nevada*, 10.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 11.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 12.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Doug Lederman, "A Fight Over Fundamentalism," in *Inside Higher Ed*, January 10, 2005. Article chronicles the presidential selection process which resulted in Yarnell's withdrawal and Aguillard's nomination. The original search committee nominated the second choice, Stan Norman, a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, but the board moved to expand the search committee and nominate Aguillard. The article notes that the faculty voted 53-12 in opposition to Aguillard as president.

he, too, emphasized athletics to garner support and lowered the admissions requirements. Another similarity between Stout and Aguillard is that both men were successful at playing to the public's opinion of how colleges and universities should operate.

Editorials appearing in the *Las Vegas Review Journal* supported Stout's dismissal of tenured professors, and argued that academic freedom was a means faculty used to set up a government to protect themselves. Some of the letters went so far as to suggest that shared governance was a vehicle that had given common radicals in colleges all over the nation the ability to destroy the sanctity of higher education.⁵⁴ Stout's supporters could also point to his creation of new schools of education, nursing, and business administration as progress; he said the additions were designed to answer the educational trends of the 1950s.⁵⁵ To calm the fears of Nevadans who believed colleges and universities were dens of communists, Stout pushed a non-communist statement through committees stacked with his hand-picked deans.⁵⁶ Five decades later at Louisiana College, Joe Aguillard would count on conservative evangelicals and fundamentalists to

⁵³ Jim Crawford to faculty council, email, March 17, 2005, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Jim Crawford was a faculty member in the department of English and modern languages. He asks that the faculty council request from president Aguillard his position on what involvement faculty will have in the textbook selection and academic freedom task forces.

⁵⁴ J. Dee Kille, *Academic Freedom Imperiled: The McCarthy Era at The University of Nevada*, 34-35.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 44.

write editorials for *The Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, criticizing liberals on the faculty.⁵⁷ And like Stout he would push through his own statement for faculty and staff, a lifestyle agreement that would require a conservative position on issues ranging from the inerrancy of the Bible to abortion.⁵⁸

Millard Stout's power first came under check when the Nevada state supreme court ruled that his dismissal of a full professor of biology, James Richardson, was a violation of the University of Nevada's own institutional policies.⁵⁹ This garnered publicity and spelled the beginning of the end for Stout. Over the next few years, the external pressure on the board of regents increased as the Friends of the University, a group of local alumni and supporters, called for an investigation, and the American Association of University Professors placed the University of Nevada on censure.⁶⁰ Ultimately, because of some changes on the board of regents, the university was investigated by an outside group of respected college and university administrators. The findings were not favorable to Stout, as his leadership was found to be the cause for

⁵⁷ Billy Miller, "LC: Love it or leave it," letter to the editor of *The Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, December 18, 2003. Billy Miller argues that Louisiana College, dating back to his days as a student there in the 1960s, has had both faculty and students who forget that it is a Baptist college. He also refers to G. Earl Guinn who served as president from 1951-1975 as one who emphasized liberal arts over the Baptist commitment. Miller says his friends on the board are working hard through recent policy moves to ensure that Louisiana College is Baptist first and liberal second. He concludes by inviting those who believe otherwise to leave.

⁵⁸ Charles Quarles, "Christian Commitment," policy draft, spring 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Quarles pens a policy which requires teaching in accordance with the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message and abstention from the public use of alcohol.

⁵⁹ J. Dee Kille, *Academic Freedom Imperiled: The McCarthy Era at The University of Nevada*, 53.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 53-57.

dissension at the university.⁶¹ Two demands were made after the release of the report. First, that the board of regents be expanded, and second, that the faculty become more involved in the academic governance.⁶² The report also influenced the public, as Stout was no longer able to point the finger at detractors as malcontent faculty members.⁶³

Throughout 1957, Stout's powers were curbed by the board of regents, and he resigned on October 5. It turns out he was asked to resign by the board of regents and bought out of his tenure for a sum of \$12,500.00.⁶⁴ Fifty years later, Joe Aguillard would meet a similar fate as his early success in labeling faculty members as out of line radicals would prove ineffective when accreditation issues, financial crises, and a series of lawsuits plagued the college. Like Stout, Aguillard would be given a buy-out and forced to vacate the presidency.

Seeds of Establishment and Conflict in Colonial Higher Education

Although there is some debate as to their founders' intentions, the colonial colleges were largely established for religious purposes.⁶⁵ Terry Lawrence suggests that a religious purpose for higher education was maintained until the Civil War era. This is because the faculties tended to be generalists committed to the institution's ideals rather

⁶¹ Ibid., 90.

⁶² Ibid., 92.

⁶³ Ibid., 93.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 96-100.

⁶⁵ John Thelin, "Colleges in the Colonial Era," in *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 2004), 1-39.

than specialists committed to a particular discipline.⁶⁶ But even earlier, the intellectual purpose of colleges was in transition, as the deism of the founding fathers, different from the theism shared by the founders of the colonial colleges, became the nation's intellectualism expressed by its institutions of higher education.⁶⁷ Lawrence further suggests that the rise of Rationalism just before the Civil War separated religion, Christianity specifically, from the sciences, thus robbing the other disciplines from a Christian perspective. As Rationalism replaced Idealism at the end of the nineteenth century, science became the source for truth in public higher education and for many church-related colleges, effectively replacing the Bible.⁶⁸

Jon Roberts identifies two late nineteenth century Christian perspectives with varying responses to the new sciences: liberal Protestants who admired knowledge and science and conservative evangelicals who were suspicious of the new disciplines.⁶⁹ The conservative evangelicals possessed two assumptions that drove their thinking: the inerrancy of the Bible which could be understood by all people and an emphasis on the supernatural.⁷⁰ Until the 1920s, the conservative evangelicals passively dismissed

⁶⁶ Terry Lawrence, "Philosophy, Religion and Education American Style: A Literature Review," *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 16 (2007): 243, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10656210701650377>.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Jon Roberts, "Conservative Evangelicals and Science Education in American Colleges and Universities, 1890-1940," *The Journal of the Historical Society*, 3 (2005): 307, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5923.2005.00132.x>.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

evolution, a product of the new sciences, as intellectual pride.⁷¹ But as studies began to indicate traces of atheism within science faculty, the conservative evangelicals began to worry about their own children being “led astray.” At this point, their rejection of the sciences became militant.⁷² George Marsden defines a fundamentalist as a conservative evangelical who militantly rejects modernism and is angry.⁷³ Conservative evangelicals, some of whom became fundamentalists in the 1920s, employed two strategies for combating the sciences. In the denominational colleges, they sought the dismissal of those advocating evolution and higher-criticism. To deal with the public colleges and universities, they pressured their state elected officials and succeeded by having thirty-seven state legislatures vote on banning the teaching of human evolution.⁷⁴

Liberal Protestants did not view the teaching of evolution or its application to the study of biblical texts, higher-criticism, as a threat to Christianity. Michael Lee writes that William Rainey Harper, the first president of The University of Chicago, advocated a Christian research university and the inclusion of the sciences as the savior of American Christianity which he feared was on the cusp of irrelevance at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷⁵ Mainline Protestant colleges, for the most part, adjusted to the changes in the sciences and biblical scholarship. As the twentieth century progressed, they began to

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism*, 1.

⁷⁴ Jon Roberts, “Conservative Evangelicals and Science Education, 1890-1940,” 317.

⁷⁵ Michael Lee, “Higher Criticism and Higher Education at the University of Chicago: William Rainey Harper’s Vision of Religion in the Research University,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 48 (2008): 511, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20462257>.

resemble state-funded institutions.⁷⁶ James Woodrow posits that even among clergy presidents, ideas about the meaning of education, for example preparation for a technical career, were gleaned from their peers in the public colleges and universities.⁷⁷ Another factor in the mellowing of some of the denominational colleges was financial survival, based on the pressure to compete with the state institutions for students.⁷⁸ Today, most of the mainline Protestant colleges are nominally affiliated with their original sponsoring bodies. The religious purpose of many of the colleges has been marginalized and the financial support and commitment to hire faculty from within the denomination have waned.⁷⁹

Southern Baptists as Resisting, Tolerating Modernism

Many Southern Baptist ministers and parishioners have resisted modernism. The degree to which their institutions resisted modernism and the adoption of the historical-critical method in the twentieth century is another matter. Carl Kell and Raymond Camp argue that Southern Baptists trace their heritage to four distinct traditions: the Charleston Tradition; the Sandy Creek Tradition; the Georgia Tradition; and the Landmark

⁷⁶ George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 33.

⁷⁷ James Woodrow, "Institutional Image: Secular and Marketing Influences on Christian Higher Education," *Christian Higher Education* 3 (2004): 119.

⁷⁸ L. Lagerquist, "Lest We become Beasts Who Devour One Another: A Lutheran Calling to Higher Education in Multi-Religious Settings," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 50 (2011): 178, accessed June 10, 2013, <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-2011.00601.x>.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

Tradition.⁸⁰ Two of these traditions help explain the differing Baptist philosophies of higher education; for example, the Sandy Creek (NC) Tradition was very emotive and anti-intellectual, whereas the Charleston (SC) Tradition emphasized higher education.⁸¹ The *1925 Baptist Faith and Message* was an effort to unite the various traditions, but collectively the Sandy Creek and Charleston traditions influenced the SBC throughout the twentieth century.⁸²

James Thompson finds that Southern Baptists were relatively late in confronting Modernism, well into the 1920s, because so much of their energies were focused on the Civil War recovery in the South.⁸³ Some professors who were a part of the Southern Baptist Educational Association, a group representing Southern Baptist professors, declared that the Bible could not be taken literally.⁸⁴ The professors worried that fundamentalism and its various tenets would limit the institutions in attracting qualified faculty and gaining academic prestige.⁸⁵ T.T. Martin, a Southern Baptist evangelist, responded to the association's declaration with a proposal to split the denomination, with

⁸⁰ Carl Kell and L. Raymond Camp, "Uncertain Times: Trouble in Zion," in *In The Name of the Father: The Rhetoric of the New Southern Baptist Convention* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois Press, 2001), 22.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ James Thompson, *Tried as by Fire: Southern Baptists and the Religious Controversies of the 1920s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982), 66.

⁸⁴ Kenneth Bailey, *Southern White Protestantism in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), 65.

⁸⁵ Bill Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of The Southern Baptist Convention* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 131.

each side forming a new convention.⁸⁶ The proposal was not adopted, although the SBC did adopt a policy against SBC employees teaching evolution.⁸⁷ Bill Leonard maintains that the policy was never enforced, thus becoming essentially a means to placate Fundamentalists within the SBC ranks.⁸⁸

Collectively, the six affiliated Southern Baptist seminaries were the first entities to draw the ire of fundamentalists within SBC ranks. Joel Gregory suggests that the seminaries' drift toward modernism, specifically the historical-critical method, began after World War II when the seminaries' own graduates returned to their alma maters as professors, having taken their doctorates at institutions such as Harvard University and Union Theological Seminary.⁸⁹ The new professors introduced their students to the historical-critical method, recruiting the brightest students to finish their educations in the Northeast and become the next generation of Southern Baptist scholars.⁹⁰ Samuel Hill contends that the addition of three new seminaries in the 1950s, all located in or near cosmopolitan cities, Golden Gate in San Francisco, Southeastern in Wake Forest, and Midwestern in Kansas City, accelerated the influx of progressive models of education for

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 66.

⁸⁹ Joel Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America's Super Church* (Fort Worth, TX: The Summit Group, 1994), 46.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Southern Baptist clergy.⁹¹ According to Arthur Farnsley, the SBC agency heads, those who managed the denomination's various headquarters in Nashville including Broadman Publishing, which distributed literature to the churches, were professionals who were more tolerant of the progressive ideologies.⁹² According to Southern Baptist journalist James Hefley, theirs was a "unity in spite of diversity approach."⁹³

The publication of two books by Southern Baptist seminary professors in the 1960s effectively reintroduced the controversy that had only simmered in the 1920s. Ralph Elliot's *The Message of Genesis* and *The Broadman Bible Commentary on Genesis* integrate the historical-critical method and suggest that many of the stories within the Genesis account could be interpreted as historical myth. The books, both published by the SBC's publishing house, ignited conservative pastors and laymen who rejected the ideas as theological liberalism that would ultimately render the SBC as simply another Protestant denomination gone awry, with a weakened emphasis on missions and evangelism.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Samuel Hill, "The Story Before the Story: Southern Baptists Since World War II," in *Southern Baptists Observed: Multiple Perspectives on a Changing Denomination* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 45.

⁹² Arthur Farnsley, *Southern Baptist Politics: Authority and Power in the Restructuring of an American Denomination* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 66.

⁹³ James Hefley, "How the Controversy Came About," in *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention, Volume 5* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1990), 13-27.

⁹⁴ Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which To Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey* (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 7.

In his memoir of the events surrounding the controversy over his book, Ralph Elliot, who took his doctorate at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville and taught Old Testament theology at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, writes that he was encouraged by Broadman Publishers to write a commentary that incorporated some elements of the historical-critical method.⁹⁵ The reception of the book was divisive with the eventual architects of the SBC's Conservative Resurgence, W.A. Criswell and Paul Pressler, identifying Elliot as an example of the theological liberalism they believed had infiltrated the seminaries and threatened the very life of the denomination.⁹⁶ Elliot was eventually fired for "insubordination," for allowing another publisher to print his book.⁹⁷ During the early 1970s, Criswell, Pressler, and other conservative pastors and laymen formed "The Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship," an organization that was founded for the purpose of reversing the trends of liberal theology in the affiliated seminaries.⁹⁸

A Hermeneutical Shove at the Seminaries

As the 1970s unfolded, Pressler and others advocated a strategy for "taking back the SBC," more specifically returning it to its conservative theological roots. Pressler writes that he devised a plan to elect an inerrantist as president of the SBC; doing so

⁹⁵ Ralph Elliot, *The Genesis Controversy and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 33.

⁹⁶ Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which to Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey*, 14.

⁹⁷ Ralph Elliot, *The Genesis Controversy and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition*, 53.

⁹⁸ Arthur Farnsley, *Southern Baptist Politics: Authority and Power in the Restructuring of an American Denomination*, 82.

would ensure that like-minded Baptists would be seated on the powerful nominating committee which was charged with selecting trustees for the seminaries.⁹⁹ The trustees would then select the presidents of the seminaries who held ultimate power for academic governance. For Pressler, seizing the SBC presidency would have a trickledown effect within ten years in which a conservative theological perspective could take hold in the affiliated institutions.¹⁰⁰

Southern Baptists, regardless of theological bent, refer to the year 1979 and its implications for the seminaries as the beginning of “The Conservative Resurgence.” Adrian Rogers, an inerrantist and member of “The Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship,” assumed the SBC presidency at the June meeting held in Houston. For the next decade, SBC conservatives successively elected inerrantists as presidents. Hefley describes the uneasiness that characterized the seminaries in the 1980s, as seminary presidents juggled moderate faculty members and conservative trustees.¹⁰¹ At first the presidents resisted the calls for change among the faculty, but eventually caved to the pressure from their changing boards of trustees.¹⁰² By the mid-1990s, the Southern

⁹⁹ Paul Pressler, *A Hill on Which To Die: One Southern Baptist's Journey*, 37.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ James Hefley, “Seminaries in the Crucible,” in *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, Volume 2* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1987), 105-127.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Baptist seminaries were more conservative, with many of their faculty members having taken retirement or opting to work at newly formed moderate seminaries.¹⁰³

The State Baptist Conventions and Colleges in the 1980s

Most states have a state Baptist convention which supports the SBC through monies it receives from member churches. In addition to supporting the SBC entities, many states also support or have supported one or more colleges. Hefley suggests that the state Baptist conventions were slower in following the Conservative Resurgence, with many of the states remaining under the influence of moderate presidents and denominational personnel until the late 1980s.¹⁰⁴ He credits the colleges and the state convention employees with slowing the Conservative Resurgence's impact on the state entities.¹⁰⁵

The Baptist colleges differ from the seminaries in scope of purpose, with most of them offering broad liberal arts and professional academic programs. According to James Hefley, the cases of Mercer University and Wake Forest University prompted concern about the future of the Baptist state colleges.¹⁰⁶ The institutions drifted away from their state conventions in the 1980s by changing their charters, such that only a portion of their trustees had to be either Baptist or chosen by the sponsoring Baptist

¹⁰³ Joe Trull, "Early Retirement," in Carl Kell (Ed.) *Exiled: Voices of the Southern Baptist Convention Holy War* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 2004), 147-152.

¹⁰⁴ James Hefley, "Struggles in the States," in *The Truth in Crisis, Volume 5* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1990), 123-142.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ James Hefley, "State Conventions and Baptist Colleges," in *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention, Volume 2* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1987), 179-197.

convention.¹⁰⁷ Some have interpreted this as a strategic move to prevent the kind of changes that were wrought at the SBC seminaries.

In an essay written in the late 1980s, Hefley offers three paradigms with the Baptist college landscape, each with a representative institution. Some of the colleges tilted toward indoctrination, with others preferring an open method of inquiry similar to that applied in the state institutions, and finally some opting for a combination of both models.¹⁰⁸ Hefley paints Mercer University as progressive, with a board and president firmly committed to academic freedom, permissive student life policies, and enough financial stability to forego the Georgia Baptist Convention's then annual gift of two million dollars.¹⁰⁹ Hefley identifies Missouri Baptist College as conservative, with the president having been praised for curbing liberal theology and the teaching of evolution.¹¹⁰ Finally he colors Samford University as trying to appease both sides of the theological spectrum.¹¹¹

The Baptist College Categories Since 1990

Hefley's predictions have been accepted as accurate from the 1990s through the 2010s. The progressive Baptist institutions with the financial resources and institutional will have received, either by way of lawsuit or the state convention vote, their independence from Southern Baptist control. Examples include Baylor University,

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ James Hefley, "Missouri Baptist, Mercer, and Samford: Three Schools in Controversy," in *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention, Volume 3* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1987), 178-203.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Mercer University, William Jewel College, Belmont University, and Georgetown College. The Baptist colleges that exhibited a conservative model of education have remained connected to their state conventions, perhaps aligning more closely with the state convention's doctrinal statements. The third paradigm, those that opted for the hybrid model in the 1980s, have taken one of two paths: either they have experienced institutional crisis as the seminaries did in the 1980s, or the colleges have strategically formulated a "covenant relationship" with their state convention in which they retain the power to select their trustees, thus curbing the effects of the Conservative Resurgence.

Louisiana College, Unique Compared to the Other Baptist College Controversies

Louisiana College was unique among the Baptist colleges experiencing controversy over the desires of its supporting state Southern Baptist convention. While it was more moderate than conservative, it retained and relied upon the support of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. In November 1989, conservative Fred Lowery, pastor of First Baptist Church Bossier City, was elected president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, assisted by those who wanted changes at Louisiana College.¹¹² Earlier that year, Louisiana College replaced its retiring chairman of the religion department with a moderate, in spite of a conservative scholar's nomination by more than forty pastors.¹¹³ More problematic, however, were rumors that the college's president, Robert Lynn, endorsed a "covenant relationship" between Louisiana College and the state convention, a governance model that would have enabled trustees to select their successors, essentially a self-perpetuating board. The Louisiana Baptist Convention's nominating

¹¹² James Hefley, *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention, Volume 4* (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1990), 11.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 24.

committee selects the trustees for all the agencies supported by funds received through the state office.¹¹⁴ Unlike Mercer University, Wake Forest University, and many other Baptist colleges, Louisiana College never secured a change in governance model, thus rendering its history much like that of the six affiliated seminaries.

The controversy at Louisiana College raged through the mid-1990s, delayed for a period of a few years, 1997-2001, largely because of a successful lawsuit filed by four professors. In 2003, however, conservatives gained enough positions on the board of trustees and implemented policies that resulted in a turnover in administrators, including the president and the vice president for academic affairs. In selecting a new president in 2005, conservatives secured their vision for Louisiana College, that the college would reflect *The Baptist Faith and Message 2000*.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

CHAPTER II

FOUNDATIONS OF THE CONTROVERSY: FUNDAMENTALISM, MODERNISM, AND EVANGELICALISM

The contemporary struggle for academic freedom in Baptist colleges in the United States is rooted in the larger debate between modernism and fundamentalism. While this may seem ironic, given that the argument has been settled since the early twentieth century with modernism as the victor, many of the issues remain central for those who propagate and oppose academic freedom in Baptist colleges. For many who seek to limit academic freedom in the Baptist colleges, their ideal college is one that reflects the nineteenth century Protestant college. This college emphasized conservative theology and morality. The literature review that follows on both the modernist-fundamentalist positions and the Protestant colleges provides some context for the positions of those who led the colleges. This cast of characters has been referred to by others and themselves as fundamentalists, modernists, and evangelicals.

Willard Gatewood compiled a collection of essays from the 1920s which help in understanding the initial conflict between modernism and fundamentalism. His thesis is that modernism was a means to reconstruct religion, whereas fundamentalism was a contention for preserving the traditional views out of fear that abandoning any of them would ultimately undermine the Christian faith. In “The Modernists’ Belief,” Shailer Matthews and Harry Emerson Fosdick defined modernism as “the use of methods of modern science to find, state, and use the permanent and central values of inherited

orthodoxy in meeting the needs of a modern world.”¹ The two deferred to scientists concerning matters of science, and put those answers above the writers of the ancient Christian creeds. For Matthews and Fosdick, the scriptures should be studied as well, without fear of undermining the faith because personal experience trumps creeds and doctrines. The two also argued, much as did William Rainey Harper, that without a progressive spirit, Christianity would become stale and irrelevant in the modern world.²

On the opposite end of the spectrum are William Bell Riley, James M. Grey, and J. Gresham Machen. In “The Fundamentalist Credo,” they offered nine fundamentals of the Christian faith: biblical inerrancy; a Trinitarian view of God; the virgin birth; man created in God’s image; Christ’s atonement; the resurrection; the premillennial return of Christ; the born again nature; and the afterlife in heaven or hell. They outlined modernism as an attack on Christianity, essentially a revolt against the Bible and Jesus Christ.³ Earlier, J. Gresham Machen, in *Christianity and Liberalism*, accused modernists of using traditional Christian language with revised definitions. For Machen, the modernists’ efforts to preserve the essence of Christianity would ultimately undermine it.⁴ His assessment of the approaches of Smith and Fosdick was that they were both un-Christian and un-scientific.⁵

¹ Willard Gatewood, *Controversy in the Twenties: Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Evolution* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 10.

² Ibid, 11.

³ Ibid., 12.

⁴ J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1923), 2-12.

⁵ Ibid.

George Marsden's work on religion and American culture provides a framework for understanding the conflict in larger Southern Baptist higher education and more specifically Louisiana College. In his first work on fundamentalism in America he sees it as an extreme and organized defense of a dying way of life that grew out of the Millenarian movement of the late nineteenth century. For Marsden, America began to cease to be a Protestant nation in roughly 1870, as immigration, German models of education, and Idealism challenged the conservative biblical suppositions.⁶ There were at least two reactions to Marsden's analysis among American Protestants. Henry Ward Beecher, a New England Evangelical, made a series of concessions on evolution and higher criticism, in an effort to maintain a viable religion.⁷ According to Michael Lee, this was also the response of William Rainey Harper, the first president of The University of Chicago. Using Harper's writings, Lee argues that Harper believed the inclusion of the scientific method into religious studies was the only hope of saving American Christianity. Lee contrasts Harper's interest in a learned faith, one that made concessions about errors within the biblical text, with the inerrancy espoused by Charles Hodge and B.B. Warfield at Princeton Seminary. For Lee, Harper's embrace of science would not erode one's belief in God. On the contrary, Harper saw Christianity in desperate need of a savior, which in his mind was the research university, a guide to "unimpeded truth."⁸

⁶ George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980.), 4.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁸ Michael Lee, "Higher Criticism and Higher Education at the University of Chicago: William Rainey Harper's Vision of Religion in the Research University," *History of Education Quarterly*, 48 (2008): 511, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20462257>.

The second reaction came from those on the opposite side of Harper and Beecher, among them D.L. Moody, Jonathan and Charles Blanchard, men who passionately confronted what they labeled liberal Christians in an era of moral decline, sure signs of the imminent return of Jesus Christ, an element of premillennialism. According to Marsden, premillennialism is a quasi-scientific approach to reading the Bible, a byproduct of the Baconian Idealism with its emphasis on “common sense” that shaped the fundamentalist perspective.⁹ This brand of theology provided easy answers to the growing urban issues, perceived moral decline, and intellectual defection.¹⁰ As the twentieth century began, according to Marsden, the denominations, comprised of varying voices, debated the issues of biblical authority and evolution. The fundamentalist coalition gained strength in the early twentieth century, with the publication of *The Fundamentals*, a twelve volume commentary. Funded by wealthy California businessman Lyman Stewart, it was mailed to every pastor, missionary, and professor between 1910 and 1915.¹¹

For Marsden, however, this comeback for conservative Protestants did not originate with the fundamentalists in the early part of century. It came from the coalition of new evangelicals who distanced themselves from their predecessors.¹² Marsden classifies fundamentalists as a sub-set of evangelicals who opposed the efforts of

⁹ Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture*, 37.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² George Marsden, *Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1991), 3.

modernists. According to Marsden, modernists sought to “save Christianity” by deifying history as a process akin to Darwinian evolution, stressing the ethical over advocating doctrine, and emphasizing religious feelings.¹³ He argues the new evangelicals arose because most Protestants, clergy and lay people alike, were neither modernists nor fundamentalists.¹⁴ In the North, more Protestants sided with the clergy who opted for modernism, while in the South, most sided with fundamentalists in opposing modernism.¹⁵

Marsden suggests that the 1960s cultural decade splintered the new evangelical coalition as progressives and conservatives within the movement differed on the social issues and the topic of biblical inerrancy.¹⁶ This resulted in discord in two of the denominations, the Southern Baptist Convention and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.¹⁷ But while the era resulted in dissension among new evangelicals, the cultural crisis was a boon for evangelicals and fundamentalists alike, as both groups were able to point to the chaos as evidence of the failures of modernism.¹⁸ And many Protestants were drawn to the answers offered by the conservative voices.¹⁹

¹³ Ibid., 33-35.

¹⁴ Ibid., 66.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 75.

¹⁷ Ibid., 76.

¹⁸ Ibid., 103.

¹⁹ Ibid., 105.

James Hunter provides an alternative comparison of American evangelicalism and fundamentalism. He distinguishes American evangelicalism in the nineteenth century from the fundamentalism often associated with the controversies ensuing in the early part of the twentieth century.²⁰ He defines the phenomenon as religio-cultural and unique to North America, and rooted in the tradition of Reformation era theological traditions and American Puritanism; it was committed to a belief in biblical inerrancy, the divinity of Christ, the efficacy of Christ's life, death and physical resurrection for the human soul, and a spiritual and experiential salvation experience, and motivated by a desire and conviction to actively proselytize all non-believers to the tenets of evangelical beliefs.²¹ For Hunter, the American evangelical story unfolds as a socio-religious phenomenon rooted in the mainstream nineteenth century Protestant experience and shaped by a reaction to modernity.²² He defines modernity as a disruption of the normalcy that had dominated American culture during much of the nineteenth century, including a Protestant majority, localism, ruralism, and traditional values defined by the Protestant period. Modernism's industrialization with its contribution to urbanization and the immigration which ensued introduced a religious and cultural diversity the nation had not experienced.²³

²⁰ James Hunter, *American Evangelicalism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 12.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 7.

²² *Ibid.*, 23.

²³ *Ibid.*, 27.

Similar to Marsden, Hunter describes the “New Christianity” that emerged in response to the changes in American society, citing the Social Gospel Movement and cooperative Christianity (1880-1920), both of which were ultimately rejected by the majority of Protestants, who opted to defend orthodoxy, following the lead of B.B. Warfield and the conservative Presbyterians at Princeton.²⁴ Hunter suggests that the period from 1919-1942 included much internal conflict within the Protestant denominations leading to a number of “independent churches” separating from the mainline denominations, with the average citizen leaning toward modernity.²⁵ For Hunter, this was accompanied by a declining hope for a truly Christian America, with fundamentalism being relegated to the lower and lower middle classes in rural areas and the new industrialized cities in the South.²⁶

Hunter traces the beginnings of the new evangelicalism to the period after World War Two, when the National Association of Evangelicals was formed, with a commitment to avoiding the negativism associated with the fundamentalism of the 1920s. The new evangelicals worked across denominational lines, offered some concessions to modernity, and focused on “saving souls,” rather than criticizing the culture.²⁷ Hunter notes that the new evangelicals have been unwilling to disclaim supernatural and spiritual events in scripture, abandon their belief in the exclusivity of the Christian message, or

²⁴ Ibid., 28, 31.

²⁵ Ibid., 37.

²⁶ Ibid., 39.

²⁷ Ibid., 41.

cave to pressures to classify their faith heritage as symbolic.²⁸ Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing into the 1970s, the new evangelicals began to view modernity as a political problem. For them, the decline in morality accelerated with the advent of the sexual revolution, changing gender roles, and the legalization of abortion in 1973.²⁹

Hunter argues that the new evangelicals have engaged politically because they see modernity as a threat to Western civilization. Modernity, its most extreme form, is seen as a propagator of moral decline and an assault on God's covenant relationship with America.³⁰ He suggests that this effort is waged against the "new class," a segment of citizens who can be described as college educated and professional, a part of the knowledge economy, tending toward secular humanism, rational thinking, leftist politics, and non-traditional gender roles.³¹ For Hunter, new evangelicals' passion for political action is rooted in a fear of judgment because of a decline in the values akin to nineteenth century norms. They have found motivation for action in the likes of Jerry Falwell's "Moral Majority."³²

Karen Armstrong paints fundamentalism as a global phenomenon impacting the major world religions, as fundamentalists struggle to encounter a world that rejects their sacred values. Armstrong suggests that fundamentalism was all but dead following the Scopes Trial in 1925, but the atrocities of World War II and the populism of radio and

²⁸ Ibid., 102.

²⁹ Ibid., 103.

³⁰ Ibid., 113.

³¹ Ibid., 107-108.

³² Ibid.

television preachers fueled a comeback in the 1950s and 1960s.³³

Modernists, fundamentalists, and evangelicals all reacted differently to the changes in American culture and higher education in the early part of the twentieth century. Modernists accommodated the new ideas and values, opting to interpret them in light of Christian teachings. Fundamentalists, from 1925 through the end of World War II, retreated to their own denominations, schools, and seminaries. Evangelicals engaged the culture through the 1950s, focusing their attention on proselytizing. But the tumultuous 1960s forged new alliances among fundamentalists and evangelicals, as the groups began to question their schools, colleges, and seminaries.

Histories of Religious Higher Education

John Thelin offers a number of critiques of the history of the colonial colleges. First, he makes a distinction between the “founding fathers” and the “founding fathers of the colonial colleges.”³⁴ This is pertinent in considering the purposes of the first institutions of higher education in North America. Taking exception with popular conjecture, Thelin suggests that the first colleges, Harvard and Yale, were not founded to train clergy rather as a finishing school for upper class males, pointing out that degrees of divinity were not awarded.³⁵ The institutions did, however, provide an undergraduate basis for those who would go to England to earn degrees in divinity.

³³ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Random House, 2001), 233.

³⁴ John Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 2.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

Thelin suggests the difference between the colonial colleges in the British colonies and their Anglican counterparts (after which they were modeled) was in the former a strong presidency, an administrator, differentiated from the “faculty rule” found in England.³⁶ Thelin paints the colonial colleges as tied to particular Protestant denominations but somewhat open in terms of admitting students of other mainstream denominations. He concludes that dissenters were the ones who often abandoned the colleges to found their own.³⁷ Yale was founded in response to what some Puritan leaders saw as increasingly liberal, ecclesiastically lenient orientations unfolding at Harvard College. The denominational colleges in the antebellum period are other examples.

Perhaps the most comprehensive historical analysis of the Protestant colleges is James Burtchaell’s *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches*. While Burtchaell is an apologist for the nineteenth century Protestant college, his work on the forces for secularization at the colleges affiliated with the major denominations is informative. His thesis is that a series of factors result in the secularization of a college: accommodations for varying theological positions, faculty members who are not members of the sponsoring denomination, students who do not identify with the denomination, decline in required religious courses and chapel services, and the efforts of denominations to accommodate modernist views for fear of losing students.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 23.

³⁸ James Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998), 820.

According to Burtchaell, Congregational colleges, the earliest denominational sponsored colleges in America, have been unstable and theologically ambiguous since their early years.³⁹ In 1775 at Dartmouth, six years after the college's founding, every graduate identified as Christian, but in 1798, only one senior was Christian.⁴⁰ The nineteenth century was the most dramatic decade of change at Dartmouth, where a commitment to Pietism maintained the college's identity, not religiosity.⁴¹ A series of Unitarian presidents followed by Modernist William Tucker transformed the college out of Piety and sectarianism.⁴² For Burtchaell, Congregationalism's theological minimization, its pluralism, and its shifting focus away from individual salvation to saving the social order combined to facilitate secularization of its colleges by the turn of the twentieth century.⁴³

The Presbyterian colleges have been prone to periods of schism and reunion.⁴⁴ According to Burtchaell, lack of financial support led to denominational disengagement and lack of protest as secularization advanced.⁴⁵ The conservatives, who were a part of the various Presbyterian denominations, tended to be separatists, not interested in warring

³⁹ Ibid., 13.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 17.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 36-37.

⁴³ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 125.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 233.

over theological issues in the colleges.⁴⁶ As Pietism replaced the old Calvinist orthodoxy in the colleges, liberty was a priority at the colleges and according to Burtchaell, it came at the expense of fidelity to Calvinist orthodoxy.⁴⁷ He draws the line of progression for the Presbyterian colleges as moving from old school Calvinism, then to new school Calvinism, and finally to no school theology.⁴⁸

According to Burtchaell, the Methodist colleges were greatly influenced by the fact that Methodism, which Wesley never intended to be a church, has always been light on theology. From the outset the Methodist colleges did not restrict faculty appointments to Methodists nor were they sectarian in their admissions.⁴⁹ Not created for the clergy but rather for the laity, the colleges' purpose has often been steeped in broad statements about patriotism or the value of the liberal arts.⁵⁰ Burtchaell notes that the Methodists sought to support their colleges rather than control them, but that support had been reduced to less than two percent of their operating budgets by 1998.⁵¹ Even by the World War II era, Methodists were the minority at their own colleges. Citing the example of Millsaps College, Burtchaell writes that communal worship ceased by 1964.⁵² The self-study for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges

⁴⁶ Ibid., 238.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 235.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 239.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 331.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 266.

⁵¹ Ibid., 263-264.

⁵² Ibid., 268.

reaffirmation of accreditation in 1969 indicated neglect of spiritual development, and that religious activities were ecumenical in nature.⁵³ One final indicator of a decline in the religiosity was that at one time in the college's history, faculty meetings were begun with devotionals. Over time this was reduced to a prayer and then a moment of silence.⁵⁴

Lutheran colleges belong to one of three Lutheran denominations: The Lutheran Church in America; The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; and The American Lutheran Church. All of the Lutheran colleges were founded in the nineteenth century, but only three of the institutions were established in cities.⁵⁵ From the beginning, the colleges belonging to The Lutheran Church in America, which tended to be small and poor, admitted non-Lutherans to keep their colleges viable.⁵⁶ The LCA viewed theological purity as querulous and divisive, so the colleges accommodated for the perspectives of non-Lutherans on the faculties, in the student bodies, and on the boards of trustees.⁵⁷ The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has historically been more conservative in theology, but has still had difficulty managing the theological perspectives of its numerous colleges.⁵⁸ The Concordia system is the largest, but according to Burtchaell, while the faculties remain nearly exclusively Lutheran, the student bodies are only approximately one-half Lutheran, with only one-third studying to be church workers, the stated purpose

⁵³ Ibid., 291.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 293.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 464.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 535.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 536.

of the LCMS colleges.⁵⁹ Of the three denominations, the colleges belonging to the American Lutheran Church, moderate in theological persuasion, have best retained their Lutheran character; according to Burtchaell this is a result of the colleges being more ethnically Lutheran, in terms of students and faculties.⁶⁰

The Baptist colleges, according to Burtchaell, have either grown closer to or moved away from their sponsoring denomination, either The Southern Baptist Convention or the American Baptist Convention (ABC), the successor to what was once the Northern Baptist Convention. The colleges sponsored by the ABC have largely become historically black colleges and universities due to their tradition of educating black ministers.⁶¹ The governance of Southern Baptist colleges is more problematic, as there has been no centralized sponsor of higher education since 1997, leaving the management of the colleges to the state conventions.⁶²

Burtchaell contends that the evangelical colleges, which have aligned with The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCCU), have remained the most faithful to their original missions.⁶³ They tend to be either mildly Calvinist (such as Dordt College) or Wesleyan in theology (such as Azusa Pacific University), congregational, conservative in ethics, biblical, and cautious toward culture, as opposed to the reactionary

⁵⁹ Ibid., 537.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid., 456.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 743.

nature of the fundamentalist Bible colleges.⁶⁴ One of the keys for the Evangelical colleges is that their student bodies are largely comprised of those who have chosen a CCCU college because of the CCCU's mission.

According to Jon Roberts the denominational colleges tended to follow the model espoused by Beecher and Harper. Notably as the new century dawned, most of the denominational colleges permitted the teaching of Darwinism.⁶⁵ Russell Nieli concurs that the denominational colleges were never in the business of promoting fundamentalism; they had long propagated a "bland Unitarianism" that was well suited for accommodating a diverse student population.⁶⁶ Terry Lawrence offers another perspective, contending that American higher education was established and expressed through a Christian worldview throughout the eighteenth century. This worldview was maintained because the colonial colleges were exclusively the products of the established churches. For Lawrence, a central focus on orthodox Christianity was maintained through the Civil War era because the average faculty tended to be comprised of greater numbers of disciplinary generalists than specialists. The only graduate education was theological, and so the core of American intellectualism had a spiritual if not a moral

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Jon Roberts, "Conservative Evangelicals and Science Education in American Colleges and Universities, 1890-1940," *The Journal of the Historical Society*, 3 (2005): 307, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5923.2005.00132.x>.

⁶⁶ Russell Nieli, "From Christian Gentleman to Bewildered Seeker: The Transformation of American Higher Education," *Academic Questions*, 20 (2007): 315, accessed June 5, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12129-007-9025-7>.

tone.⁶⁷ Lawrence suggests that the Deism of the founding fathers, different from the Theism of the college builders, ultimately became the Republic's intellectualism and was expressed in the college. Therefore, religious life was left to the churches.

According to Lawrence, the rise of Rationalism as the nineteenth century reached its midpoint and separated religion from the sciences. This robbed the various disciplines of a Christian perspective. As the 1800s closed, Idealism replaced Rationalism, with science often becoming the source for truth.⁶⁸ For Lawrence, the period between 1870 and 1930 was one of drastic transformation of higher education. Citing scholars Marsden and Noll, Lawrence posits that the shift was caused by the convergence of specialized research, the secularization of American culture, and the fundamentalist controversies. Lawrence notes a number of other factors of change within the era: new technologies, academic professionalism with the advent of departments and organizations, the loss of the Protestant ethic due to urbanization and immigration, and population growth.

Lawrence cites Humanism's impact as educators in the early twentieth century ceased to express any religious perspectives, for fear of discriminating against another. While college presidents tended to be Christian, they feared the potential "stifling ability" of their religious bodies. In a period of six decades (1870 to 1930), colleges had accepted science as the authority and public service as charitable mission.⁶⁹ The changing landscape in higher education resulted in some colleges becoming Bible schools, with

⁶⁷ Terry Lawrence, "Philosophy, Religion and Education American Style: A Literature Review," *Journal of Research on Christian Education*, 16 (2007): 243, accessed June 4, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10656210701650377>.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 253.

others relegating the religious exercises to be optional but available. The denominational colleges, according to Lawrence, went through a series of stages in which the religious values were, over time, watered down. She cites the use of the term “Judeo-Christian” which came in vogue in the 1950s, in place of “Christian” as an adjective of choice in describing an institution’s heritage. For Lawrence, Christianity ceased to permeate the curriculum. Instead, it became an add-on.

Lawrence also cites a range of external factors that changed the denominational colleges throughout the twentieth century. These include the need for students in order to generate operating funds, the need to accommodate the federal government in order to qualify for federal financial aid, professional program creation, marketing strategies, and career emphases. For Lawrence, postmodernism has further deviated the denominational colleges from their original missions, and she argues that the dichotomy of secular versus sacred as a choice has been empowered by a lack of a Christian mind. Mark Noll shares Lawrence’s contention that the Christian mind, more specifically a Christian intellectualism, has been absent since the rise of American fundamentalism in the early twentieth century. He argues that this is a radical departure from the intellectualism of the reformers and the Puritans.⁷⁰ Calling this a scandal of the evangelical mind, Noll suggests the scandal permeates evangelical culture, institutions, and theological perspectives.

For Noll, as intellectualism has infiltrated American life, often offering an alternate science, the evangelicals have developed a sense of urgency and been prone to activism. For example, premillennialism was emphasized in the late nineteenth century

⁷⁰ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 9.

and creation science a century later. These views, along with conservative theology, are often propagated at some of the evangelical institutions, which Noll criticizes as having no significant scholarly presses. He suggests that the rise of the Religious Right in the 1970s has been a further contributor to the decline of a Christian mind, and that the goals of many evangelical denominations have given rise to the Bible college movement, a departure from the denominational liberal arts college model.⁷¹

In his historiographical essay, “A ‘Dying Light’ or a Newborn Enlightenment: Religion and Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century,” Mark Schwehn compares and contrasts the various positions taken by historians throughout the twentieth century with regard to the issues of the secularization of higher education, calling into question the accuracy of their theses. First he asks whether the forces that changed higher education were internal or external. Next he asks whether religion has been expelled altogether from higher education.⁷² Reflecting on Laurence Veysey’s 1965 book, *The Emergence of the American University*, Schwehn questions Veysey’s conclusion that religion was expelled altogether from the academy in the period between 1865 and 1910. Citing another historian, Julie Reuben, and her 1996 book, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality*, Schwehn asks if religious motives actually continued until the 1960s.

⁷¹ Ibid., 149.

⁷² Mark Schwehn, “A ‘Dying Light’ or a Newborn Enlightenment: Religion and Higher Education in the Twenty-First Century,” *History of Education Quarterly*, 45 (2005): 454, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20461994>.

Schwehn contends that the secularization of higher education has had more to do with external forces, essentially federal legislation, rather than internal forces such as specialization and science. He questions the suppositions of Marsden and Burtchaell who, as noted earlier, argued that higher education lost its soul when the primary purpose for higher education ceased to include character formation. Schwehn also argues that both the 1860s and the 1960s were periods of change in higher education, not because of the motives of faculty, but rather because of the influence of the federal government via the Morrill Act in 1862 and the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 in the decade after World War II.

Schwehn also points out that many religious colleges remain a part of the American higher education landscape, and thus to suggest that religious higher education no longer exists is inaccurate. He notes that Catholic higher education which has, unlike Protestant higher education, maintained a strong presence in research universities, is often ignored when scholars discuss the secularization of higher education. Similarly, John Schmalzbauer contends that the "secularization thesis" that the American college campus is purely secular is myth. He also questions the evangelical proposition that those who attend college often do so to the detriment of their faith. The author does concede that mainline Protestantism with its restrictive campus codes of conduct has ceased to dominate student life.

William Ringenberg provides a history of the secularization of the Protestant colleges and the various responses to the phenomenon. He suggests a later secularization movement than other scholars that occurred after World War I, a time when those in the colleges began to opt for social gospel emphases rather than a supernatural one.⁷³ Ringenberg offers seven philosophical orientations that mark secularization in a Christian college: Christian goals become sociological, not theological; there is a reduced emphasis on the “Christianity” espoused by faculty; the Bible’s role in the curriculum is reduced; institutional support of religious activities, the chapel program in particular, declines; there is a reduction in church affiliation or dropping it altogether, significant budget cuts occur on matters of Christian programming, and students and faculty begin to come to the college in spite of and not because of Christian purposes.⁷⁴

Ringenberg argues that Christian colleges often failed to update their stated philosophical missions, and in some cases the neglect was intentional, so as to placate constituencies.⁷⁵ Two examples of secularization he explores are Franklin College and Ripon College. In the case of Franklin, a Northern Baptist College founded in 1900 with the aim of “training Christian workers,” secularization occurred between 1920 and 1970.⁷⁶ In the 1920s, two courses in biblical studies were required, and daily chapel services were mandatory. By the 1950s, the biblical studies requirement was cut in half,

⁷³ William Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 131.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 122.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 136.

and one chapel service was held weekly, although students were not required attend.⁷⁷

By 1970, chapel services were sporadic, biblical courses were not required, and

Christianity was presented as a better option among the world religions. The experience of Ripon College, founded in 1883 as a college of the Congregational Church, is similar.

In the 1920s, the college had as its motto “the simplicity of the Christian life permeating all activities.”⁷⁸ By the 1950s, a single Bible course was offered rather than the two

originally required, and by the 1970s, the college motto shifted to “to foster character,” a more generic purpose.⁷⁹

Ringenberg offers four categories of Protestant colleges: essentially secular, generally religious, liberal Protestant, and conservative Protestant.⁸⁰ His thesis is that overall the colleges secularized at a faster rate than either their sponsoring denominations or society. He does note one exception, the private historically Black colleges and universities which maintained chapel requirements well into the 1940s.⁸¹ Ringenberg also provides three reactions to the secularization of the Protestant colleges, essentially what the denominations did in response. First, many of the leaders of the Protestant denominations turned their attention to religious activities at the state colleges which were experiencing growing enrollments.⁸² Second, the more conservative denominations

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

started Bible colleges, aimed at practical training for ministers, usually for a short period of study, for a year or two. Finally, a number of new denominational colleges emerged, what Ringenberg dubs “fundamentalist colleges,” often supported by authoritarian pastors of super churches, for example Bob Jones University. These were aimed at teaching students what they already believed, with limited intellectual and academic freedom for faculty and students.⁸³ Ringenberg describes the Protestant colleges as stable in the 1980s, with most of them having either abandoned their sponsoring religious body or remained in good standing with the denomination.⁸⁴ He regards the colleges as being as strong as before the crisis in the 1920s, with many of the colleges growing in terms of academic quality, intellectual openness, and athletic offerings.

Not all scholars hold that colleges and universities have expelled religiosity from their campuses. John Schmalzbauer cites six signs of contemporary religious vitality on college campuses. Evangelicalism, once the work of the mainline denominations, he suggests, has become the work of a host of thriving para-church groups, such as Intervarsity, Campus Crusade for Christ, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, which cite large numbers of weekly participants. The author suggests that both Catholic and Jewish student organizations have been reinvigorated in the past two decades after a decline in the 1970s and 1980s.

Schmalzbauer offers the matriculation of immigrant students as the cause for growth in Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist campus organizations. He also suggests that the mainline Protestant denominations themselves have shown signs of new life, with the

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

advent of religious residence halls. Finally, Schmalzbauer cites the embrace of spirituality by student affairs professionals as evidence of the renewal of religion on campus. Schmalzbauer's research suggests that a dissertation on the nature of religion and its relationship to the academy is pertinent. His argument that faith is an important element in the lives of today's college students is worthy of additional study. His work also suggests that today's student populace is unlike the one served by the denominational colleges of last century, as students possess a wide array of beliefs and values that may or may not mesh with the Protestant Christianity that was dominant in American culture throughout the nineteenth century.⁸⁵

Lagerquist provides some insight into the role that the mainline denominational colleges have assumed in light of their abandoning their initial mission. The author distinguishes this from a tendency to simply respect no religion. Lagerquist suggests that the Lutheran model of education cannot be characterized as indoctrination, as the various colleges have maintained connection to the local churches. Drawing upon the writings of Luther, the author suggests that Lutheran education is not limited to the preparation of ministers but also has a mission to train people for vocations that serve the public good.⁸⁶ She calls for a middle way for Lutherans in the new era of religion in America, neither intolerance nor indifference, but rather, respect.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ John Schmalzbauer, "Campus Religious Life in America: Revitalization and Renewal," *Society*, 50 (2013): 115, accessed June 3, 2013, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s12115-013-9640-6>.

⁸⁶ L. DeAne Lagerquist, "Lest We become Beasts Who Devour One Another: A Lutheran Calling to Higher Education in Multi-Religious Settings," *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 50 (2011): 176, accessed June 10, 2013, <http://www.dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-2011.00601.x>.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

Lagerquist traces the history of Lutheran colleges in the twentieth century which witnessed many closings, with most Lutheran colleges experiencing at least a decline in the number of Lutheran faculty and staff. Some also lost significant financial support.⁸⁸ But the author also suggests that the Lutheran spirit is maintained in the offering of voluntary attendance worship services on the campuses.⁸⁹ Lagerquist contends that Lutheran colleges admitting students of other faiths is not a capitulation to secularization, rather an extension of the public good purpose of higher education advocated by the Martin Luther.⁹⁰

Arthur Holmes explores the various purposes proponents of Christian higher education have assigned to the colleges.⁹¹ His first category is the “defender of the faith college,” which is expected by the sponsoring religious body to provide a safe environment for the denomination’s students entrusted to the affiliated college, where all the answers are well within the confines of orthodoxy.⁹² The second category is the college that provides a good education, plus a biblical studies program, all within a pious atmosphere.⁹³ Holmes’ third category of Christian colleges is more like a seminary, focused on preparing students for church vocations, in which students are “trained” to

⁸⁸ Ibid., 178.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 180.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 182.

⁹¹ Arthur Holmes, *The Idea of a Christian College* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 5.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

interpret and evaluate information based on the denomination's faith statement.⁹⁴ The final category for Holmes is the Christian college, only distinct in its social and extracurricular benefits.

Holmes's thesis is that the Christian college should integrate faith and learning throughout the curriculum, and engage secular culture rather than fearing or rejecting it.⁹⁵ He argues for a college model that is more constructive than defensive, and one primarily focused on undergraduate education, and rooted in the liberal arts. Holmes suggests that the liberal arts prepares one to think and adapt, thus making persons who can use their education in leadership in various vocations.⁹⁶ He connects this ideal with the initial purposes of the earliest American colleges. Finally, Holmes makes a case for academic freedom and responsibility within the Christian college, suggesting that it is essential to the academic task.⁹⁷

James Patterson offers a history of The Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, a Washington, D.C. based consortium that exists to lobby for policies beneficial to Evangelical colleges. The organization was born out of desires of evangelical Carl Henry, who was publisher of *Christianity Today*.⁹⁸ The group was organized in the 1970s when 11 evangelical colleges met in Tempe, Arizona, to discuss the idea of a Christian university. Eventually, the CCCU developed into a body aimed at

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 6.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 62.

⁹⁸ James Patterson, *Shining Lights: A History of the Council of Christian Colleges and Universities* (Grand Rapid, MI: Eerdmans, 2001), 11.

serving the interests of Protestant colleges. Patterson calls this change in focus a result of the “threat factor,” when the laws and culture of the 1970s preferred colleges that were not pervasively religious.⁹⁹ The group’s four goals in 1975 were to: provide services to member institutions, enhance leadership activities for Christian higher education, provide a unified voice for evangelical higher education, and stimulate attention to issues in Christian higher education.¹⁰⁰

In summary, the majority of Protestant colleges moderated their theological positions during the twentieth century. The changes were largely the result of pragmatism, born out of the need to survive by attracting students and qualified faculty outside the denomination. The changes have often meant a reduction in religious emphasis, for example the elimination of required chapel attendance and courses on the Bible. Faculty members from other Christian denominations and even non-Christians have been hired. For many of the colleges, their student bodies no longer reflect their sponsoring denomination with most students choosing the colleges for their academic programs rather than their theological traditions.

Some Protestant colleges have remained closely connected to their founding traditions and Christian orthodoxy. These colleges typically fall within the realm of conservative evangelicalism, primarily from the Baptist, Wesleyan, or Calvinist traditions. As higher education has become more expensive and the market for students more competitive, these colleges have banded together to lobby for their collective

⁹⁹ Ibid., 14.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 17.

interests. Some of these efforts have centered on the impact of public policy on private institutions.

Finally, a number of new institutions emerged as conservative factions from the mainline denominations' established colleges to promote their ideas. For the most part these institutions have not sought regional accreditation and have limited their programs to those training ministers, usually for a shorter period of time than a typical degree program. There are exceptions though, as both Bob Jones University and Oral Roberts University are regionally accredited.

CHAPTER III

IDEOLOGICAL STRIFE WITHIN THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION:
 DYSFUNCTION THROUGHOUT THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A number of historians and sociologists have explored the modernism-fundamentalism struggle within the Southern Baptist Convention in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, specifically how the struggle was manifested within the constellation of affiliated colleges and seminaries. Kenneth Bailey, in his history of the shaping of power forces in the South, discusses how clergyman came to wield so much power in the region, a direct result of the Southern White frustration over the loss of political control during the Reconstruction Era.¹ James Thompson's coverage of Southern Baptist sociology is similar. He discusses the Southern Baptist Convention's response to the controversies facing orthodox Christian beliefs in the 1920s, including the Social Gospel, Darwinian evolution, urbanization, Roman Catholicism, and higher-criticism.²

Thompson posits that Southern Baptists did not grapple with the German influence on biblical interpretation until the 1920s because they were busy trying to make sure the denomination survived in the period after the Civil War.³ He also argues that some higher-criticism was tolerated in the seminaries until World War I; he connects the German enemy in the conflict with what was proposed as a logical conclusion to the

¹ Kenneth Bailey, "Southern White Protestantism at the Turn of the Century." *The American Historical Review*, 68 (1963): 618.

² *Ibid.*, 625.

³ James Thompson, *Tried as By Fire: Southern Baptists and the Religious Controversies of the 1920s* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1982), 54.

scientific method, the massive loss of life. Thompson credits J. Frank Norris, an influential Southern Baptist Texas pastor, with sounding the alarm on the issue of higher-criticism in the decade after World War II. His book is helpful, as it helps one recognize a pattern in the Southern Baptist “battle for the Bible.”⁴

Carl Kell and Raymond Camp discuss four distinct traditions that make up the Southern Baptist Convention: The Charleston Tradition, The Sandy Creek Tradition, The Georgia Tradition, and The Landmark Tradition.⁵ The Charleston Tradition was more formal and Calvinistic in theology. The Georgia Tradition was a moderate blend, while the Sandy Creek and Landmark Traditions were radically conservative and of the sect-typology. Kell and Camp posit that while the differing traditions were supposedly unified in the “1925 Baptist Faith and Message,” they all influenced the SBC well into the 1990s. According to the authors, the Sandy Creek Tradition, hailing from Sandy Creek, North Carolina, was characterized by dramatic preaching and a suspicion of education. This movement spread into Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, and Texas. Their work is helpful in thinking about some of the anti-intellectualism that surrounded if not promoted the controversies in the Deep South states represented by the Sandy Creek Tradition.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Carl Kell and Raymond Camp, “Uncertain Times: Trouble in Zion.” In *In the Name of the Father: The Rhetoric of the New Southern Baptist Convention*, (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 14-26.

Arthur Farnsley chronicles the various power struggles in the Southern Baptist Convention from its founding in 1845.⁶ Farnsley's work is instructive because he describes the issue over perceived liberalism in the seminaries as a problem due in large part to who managed the Southern Baptist agencies before the Conservative Resurgence. Farnsley argues that many of the agency heads were professionals, and were therefore much more tolerant of progressive views of biblical interpretation. This point is well illustrated in SBC Sunday School Board's publication of the 1969 Broadman Bible Commentary, a series that included a volume on the book of Genesis written from the perspective of the historical-critical method.⁷ Farnsley further traces the efforts of the conservatives to align themselves around common goals in the early 1970s via a movement called the "Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship." The group published a periodical, *The Southern Baptist Journal*.⁸

David Hart provides a rationale for the development of American theological seminaries, especially Southern Baptist ones. His thesis is that prior to the end of the nineteenth century, Protestant colleges were entrusted with theological training for ministers.⁹ With the importation of higher criticism into many of the Protestant colleges, the denominations, especially evangelical ones, turned to seminaries to maintain an

⁶ Arthur Farnsley, *Southern Baptist Politics* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 3.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁹ David Hart, "American Learning and the Problem of Religious Studies." In *The Secularization of the Academy*, edited by George Marsden and B. Longfield, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 195-233.

orthodox clergy.¹⁰ Samuel Hill discusses the culture of the Southern Baptist seminaries in the 1950s, just before the Elliot controversy in 1961. He points out that three of the six affiliated seminaries were created in the 1950s, and that their locations tended to be rather cosmopolitan: Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary near San Francisco; Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest; and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City.¹¹ According to Hill, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary was much more ecumenical than its peers from the outset. And at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, many of the faculty, even if they had not earned their degrees at eastern universities, served in World War II and thus possessed a worldview broader than their predecessors.

Hill posits that the culture of the Southern Baptist Convention agencies was so enthralled in corporate speech in the 1950s that a kind of diplomacy permitted the creep of higher-criticism. A controversy, after all, could have slowed the denomination's growth. When thinking about Baptist colleges in the 1980s and 1990s, many of the religion faculty members were instructed by the very professors who began their tenure at the affiliated seminaries in the late 1950s and 1960s. Nancy Ammerman describes the grassroots pressure that many in the SBC leadership experienced as those in the pew began to be exposed to young ministers who shared progressive views on biblical

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Samuel Hill, "The Story before the Story: Southern Baptists Since World War II." In *Southern Baptists Observed: Multiple Perspectives on a Changing Denomination*, edited by Nancy Ammerman, (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 30-46.

interpretation.¹² She also notes that the seminary graduates' liberal views on civil rights also disturbed some among the laity.¹³ Joe Barnhart suggests that this disconnect between the growing modernism in the pulpit and the fundamentalism in the pew provided the fundamentalist leadership with an early political base of support.¹⁴

Similarly, Grady Cothen connects mainline Southern Baptists' frustration with what they perceived to be social upheaval in the 1960s and their decision to focus on the seminaries in the 1970s. His thesis is that this amounted to a retreat designed to concentrate on what they could control. Seminaries, the mainliners believed, were or should be "think-tanks" for Southern Baptists.¹⁵

David Stricklin offers a complementary thesis to Cothen's. He asserts that Southern Baptists, by and large, were "outsiders" throughout the twentieth century, inclined to engage in or support political activism in the face of cultural problems. For Stricklin, Southern Baptists of various theological persuasions have been given to anti-establishment tendencies since the denomination's founding over the issue of slavery in the 1840s.¹⁶ He presents a kind of "Baptist Zion" world that maintained the pre-Civil War status quo throughout the nineteenth century South, unfettered by changes in

¹² Nancy Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflicts in The Southern Baptist Convention* (New Brunswick, NY: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 128.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Joe Barnhart, *The Southern Baptist Holy War* (Austin, TX: Texas Monthly Press, 1986), 56.

¹⁵ Grady Cothen, *The New SBC: Fundamentalism's Impact on The Southern Baptist Convention* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 1995), 126.

¹⁶ David Stricklin, *A Genealogy of Dissent: Southern Baptist Protest in the Twentieth Century* (Lexington, KY: The University of Kentucky Press, 1999), 8.

religious questions in the North. The new century produced a new Southern Baptist group of “outsiders,” those who were influenced by their Northern counterparts and the Social Gospel, which called for a concern for human rights in addition to individual salvation.¹⁷

Stricklin describes Walter Nathan Johnson as the most influential “progressive outsider.” A Southern Baptist who pushed for integration in the 1920s and 30s, Stricklin argues that Johnson went beyond advocating for racial integration.¹⁸ Johnson, Stricklin maintains, influenced an entire generation of Southern Baptist progressives to devote their lives to a broad range of issues within and without the denomination, including Civil Rights, labor, peace and justice, and women in ministry.¹⁹ Johnson and his disciples emphasized the practical dimensions of the gospel, choosing not to take literally some of the miracles.²⁰ While some of the progressives drifted toward the American Baptist Convention, the Northern Baptist Convention’s successor, a number of them chose to remain within the Southern Baptist Convention. Two examples are Foy Valentine and Victor Glenn, both progressive church leaders of the Civil Rights Era.²¹

¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

¹⁸ Ibid., 20.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 74.

²¹ Ibid., 142.

For Stricklin, the influence of Johnson and his fellow progressives gave rise to a new set of SBC conservative dissenters, fundamentalists who blended their religious views and political activity in the years following World War Two.²² While a faction of conservative Southern Baptists, led by J. Frank Norris and T.T. Martin, was influential in the 1920s, their goal was to divide the SBC. They advocated for separating from those they labeled liberals, a similar position espoused by classical fundamentalists.²³ Stricklin posits that the new outsiders were devoted to reform. Led by First Baptist Church of Dallas pastor W.A. Criswell, an anti-modernist and opponent of integration, the dissenters challenged the SBC's structure and questioned its institutions and agencies.²⁴ Stricklin suggests that some of the new dissenters' fear of liberalism was a result of the efforts of John Birch; nevertheless, Southern Baptists were uncomfortable with the direction of the nation and suspicious of their own denomination. Criswell, with his national audience and role as a mentor to young ultraconservatives, reinforced his followers' concerns as First Baptist Dallas established its own system of private schools, worked closely with Dallas Baptist University, and established its own seminary in 1971, as an alternative to the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary that was located in Fort Worth.²⁵

²² Ibid., 143.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 144.

²⁵ Ibid., 145.

Criswell and the new SBC fundamentalists were successful, unlike Norris in the 1920s.²⁶ This was somewhat ironic because Criswell's First Baptist Dallas had been a stronghold of SBC loyalty during his predecessor's tenure. Under the authoritarian Criswell, the church became a center for the new SBC fundamentalism. The SBC moderates reacted, referring to Criswell and his following as troublemakers, in a failed effort to classify Criswell with Norris.²⁷ In sum, Stricklin connects the rise in modern Southern Baptist fundamentalism to the perceived "liberal drift" in the seminaries, which he argues came into focus with the publication of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary professor Ralph Elliot's *The Message of Genesis* in 1961. The book held that the characters Adam and Eve may have been representatives of the human race.²⁸ Stricklin also suggests that the conservatives, in light of the Elliot controversy, asked for "some parity" in the seminary professorships in the hiring of some literalists.

Barry Hankins agrees that the Conservative Resurgence and the changes wrought at the seminaries in the 1980s and 1990s were reactions to the progressiveness of American culture.²⁹ He posits that many of the key players in the controversy had experienced progressive theology in the North and were determined to prevent it from shaping Southern Baptists. Hankins, who taught at Louisiana College in the 1980s, rejects the use of the term fundamentalist to describe Southern Baptist conservatives.³⁰

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Barry Hankins, *Uneasy in Babylon: Southern Baptist Conservatives and American Culture* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2002), 2.

³⁰ Ibid., 12.

His rationale is that they cannot be referred to as fundamentalists because they have not opted to be separatists. Rather they employ a socio-political agenda for transforming culture.³¹ Pointing to current Southern Baptist Theological Seminary president Albert Mohler, Hankins characterizes the SBC leadership as neo-evangelical.³² As a student at Samford University and later at Southern Seminary, Mohler grew frustrated with the unwillingness of Southern Baptist scholars to grapple with abortion and homosexuality. His dissatisfaction with the answers he was getting in the 1980s led him to reach out to evangelicals in other denominations, scholars like J.I. Packer and Carl F.H. Henry who he believed had the intellectual fortitude to grapple with the lingering cultural problems.³³

Hankins credits some moderate Southern Baptist figures with addressing the issues of race, civil rights, and Jim Crow in the 1950s and 1960s.³⁴ But when it came to the moral issues of the 1970s, abortion and the role of women in the home and ministry, Southern Baptist moderates were shy, resistant to the certitude of evangelicals, and feared that it was too close to the 1920s fundamentalism.³⁵ Pointing to a 1980s book by Southern Baptists James Leo Garret and Glenn Hinson, *Are Southern Baptists Evangelicals?*, Hankins posits that Southern Baptist moderates were concerned that the term referred to those who wanted to fight over theology because of a preoccupation with

³¹ Ibid., 14.

³² Ibid., 27.

³³ Ibid., 28.

³⁴ Ibid., 16.

³⁵ Ibid., 31.

orthodoxy.³⁶ He suggests that this may have stemmed from the caricatures of 1920s Southern Baptist fundamentalist J. Frank Norris and his tirades against science.³⁷ Hankins also suggests that Southern culture changed without SBC moderates recognizing it, and that ultimately the perspective offered by the neo-evangelicals was more fitting for the Southern Baptists in the pew who were wrestling with the South's changing cultural landscape.³⁸

Hankins suggests that the Southern Baptist conservatives offered a series of articulations of their vision for reforming the South and the nation: a new intellectualism, a reformed activism, and populism. The new intellectual movement drew its roots from confessional Calvinism. The political activism was achieved through the efforts of the once "separation of church and state minded Ethics and Christian Life Commission," renamed to reflect a defense of religion.³⁹ The populism was fashioned in the SBC pastors, Adrian Rogers, Charles Stanley, and W.A. Criswell, who had large television audiences.⁴⁰

In his memoir of the "Genesis Affair," Ralph Elliot also traces the Southern Baptist controversy to the rumblings that ensued over his publication of *The Message of Genesis* in 1961, a book that applied some elements of the historical-critical method. Elliot argues that the issues leading to the Conservative Resurgence were academic in

³⁶ Ibid., 16.

³⁷ Ibid., 17.

³⁸ Ibid., 39.

³⁹ Ibid., 41.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 42.

nature and could have been resolved had the six affiliated seminaries collectively addressed the concerns of laypeople in the early 1960s. He laments the use of doublespeak by seminary administrators and faculty, designed to hide or conceal troublesome concepts in biblical scholarship.⁴¹ Elliot also asserts that some clergymen planted students in classes for the purpose of gathering information to use against professors.

Gender roles may have also been a factor in the ideological struggle over the Baptist institutions. David Morgan found that women in the Southern Baptist Convention have struggled to find equality with their male counterparts. However, in the 1960s and 1970s, women gained a number of professorships and other positions at the seminaries.⁴² Their gains ceased in the 1980s as a result of the Conservative Resurgence. Many conservatives in the SBC contend that women should not be pastors, and at some of the affiliated seminaries women have been prohibited from studying theology. This was an issue at Louisiana College, as a female candidate for a tenure-track theology position was rejected by the board of trustees.

As the 1980s unfolded and the controversy at the seminaries intensified, faculties at the affiliated colleges expressed concern that their academic freedom was at risk. Larry Ingram, Robert Thornton, and Renee Edwards describe the conundrum of a Baptist college, an entity funded and tied to a state subsidiary of the Southern Baptist Convention

⁴¹ Ralph Elliot, *The Genesis Controversy and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1992), 27.

⁴² David Morgan, *Southern Baptist Sisters: In Search of Status, 1845-2000* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2003), 14.

usually through its governing body, with a mission to offer a broad liberal education.⁴³

Their article sets forth the fears the Baptist college administrators had in light of what had been taking place at the affiliated seminaries. The data suggest that Baptist faculty members were frightened that their academic freedom was in danger as the Conservative Resurgence unfolded. This article, if read by observers of the Baptist college controversies, might be classified as prophetic.

The Controversy for Conservatives

A number of self-avowed conservative Southern Baptists, many of them members of the clergy or presently employed at the various agencies and seminaries, have penned their perspectives on the struggle ensuing at various seminaries in the 1980s and 1990s. Their work does touch on the issue of the colleges. During the 1980s, when the struggle at the seminaries was at its climax, James Hefley, a Southern Baptist journalist, wrote a number of volumes, titled *The Truth in Crisis*. Using primary sources, Hefley provides a historical account of the conservative perspective during the controversy.

He describes the role the “Conservative Resurgence,” a term referring to the ascension of self-avowed inerrantists to positions of leadership, was having in the states.⁴⁴ While the seminaries were immediately affected by the appointments made by the Southern Baptist Convention presidents, the colleges were slower to feel the impact because they were funded by the state Baptist conventions rather than the SBC. Hefley reveals that inerrantists in the states were using the same modus to gain political power as

⁴³ Larry Ingram, Robert Thornton, & Renee Edwards, “Perceptions of Academic Freedom in Southern Baptist Colleges. In Ammerman, Nancy (Ed.), *Southern Baptists Observed: Multiple Perspectives on a Changing Denomination*, (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1993), 222-236.

⁴⁴ James Hefley, “Struggles in the States.” In *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention*, 5 (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1990), 123-142.

had those vying for positions in the national leadership: raising issue with the theology espoused by religion faculty at the affiliated colleges. According to Hefley, the success of the conservatives varied state by state, with some states, Louisiana and Georgia for example, finally capitulating to the conservatives, while the other states continued to be held by the moderates. The author contends that state convention employees, along with some of the college and alumni groups, aided in maintaining the moderate power hold.

Some of the efforts to reform the religion faculties over at the colleges were stopped due to the way the institution's boards of trustees were selected.⁴⁵ Mercer, for example, had a covenant relationship with its state convention. In this arrangement, the trustees were essentially self-perpetuating, as they, along with the alumni groups, selected new trustees. In some cases, serving on a board could be a long-term appointment, with some serving for well over a decade.⁴⁶ Hefley suggests that this delayed the Conservative Resurgence's impact on some of the state colleges throughout the 1980s, as attrition became the only means for an opportunity to replace a trustee. According to Hefley, Robert Lynn, then president of Louisiana College, in the summer of 1989, proposed a covenant relationship with its body, the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Some reports indicate that the sitting trustees even agreed to the proposal. Hefley's concluding prediction is that the 1990s would continue to be a decade of political jockeying among the state conventions.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

Hefley's work is helpful in understanding the level of difficulty conservative Southern Baptists faced in attempting to infiltrate the state conventions and ultimately the state Baptist colleges. It also helps one see how some institutions' leadership made amendments or tried to make amendments to the process for selecting trustees, so as to essentially shield their colleges from the instability and sometimes administration and faculty turnover that accompanied the changes in the affiliated seminaries' boards of trustees in the 1980s. One can begin to draw a hypothesis as to the factors and fears driving the colleges and their leadership as the Conservative Resurgence began to affect the states.

Hefley chronicles the deterioration in the relationships among the six Southern Baptist affiliated seminaries in the 1980s and their administrations, faculties, and boards of trustees. At many of the seminaries the faculties were moderates, the presidents more moderate than conservative but pragmatic, and the boards of trustees were more conservative, as the successive conservative Southern Baptist presidents nominated inerrantists to the nominating committee for the seminaries.⁴⁷ Hefley portrays the presidents as initially resistant to change, especially regarding board input in their institution's day-to-day activities. The political climate proved problematic for the leaders as their words were often used against them by one party or another.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ James Hefley, "Seminaries in the Crucible." In *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention*, 2 (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1987), 105-127.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 107.

In 1985, the “Peace Committee,” a body appointed by the SBC president for the purpose of determining whether the seminaries had appropriate theological balance, was appointed. Three of the six seminaries, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, and Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, were found to have problems. Professors were strictly scrutinized for liberal theology, with their writings, and even their doctoral dissertations examined.⁴⁹ Ultimately in 1986, the six presidents met in Glorieta, New Mexico, and drafted a seven line statement, which they hoped would ease concerns among the conservative elements in the convention.⁵⁰ The statement did little good, according to Hefley, because the language sounded appealing to the conservatives, especially one line about the Bible was not errant in any area of reality. Conservative leaders viewed the statement as one upholding inerrancy, but as Hefley uncovers, the seminary presidents believed the statement was open to broad interpretation.

Hefley asserts that the presidents’ approach offered a middle way that ultimately pleased no one. Faculty members feared the presidents were making too many concessions. Once the conservatives on the boards heard that the Glorieta Statement was open-ended, they felt they had been misled by the seminary presidents.⁵¹ What ultimately defeated the presidents of the seminaries were their own words. They became the victims of comments they made that were later used against them.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 109.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 119.

⁵¹ Ibid., 122.

Hefley's work on the seminaries under fire provides a good case study regarding the problematic nature of Southern Baptist higher education administration. In secular higher education, a president is assumed to be a kind of mediator between the board of governors and the faculty. But in the Southern Baptist higher education world of the 1980s, the newly appointed conservative trustees viewed the role of the president as that of "hatchet man."⁵² To be judged as successful was not by building consensus; instead, institutional compliance with the board of trustees was the measure. The presidents appear to have tried to do both, to make their faculties appear to be compliant and to also keep their faculties from fearing those in power.⁵³ For Hefley, there are a number of ways to interpret the seminary leadership in the 1980s. Conservatives likely rate it as slow and perhaps even deceptive. The moderates likely view it as having erred by ever having made early concessions. The reality is that the presidents may have actually slowed the inevitable. This, among other things, gave their faculties some time to find more amiable employment.⁵⁴

Hefley traces conservative Southern Baptists' growing concerns over some of its colleges such as Wake Forest and Mercer universities.⁵⁵ Both institutions drifted away from their state conventions during the 1980s, with Wake Forest separating from the North Carolina Baptist Convention in 1986. According to Hefley, a number of factors converged in the histories of both institutions to weaken their connections with the

⁵² Ibid., 125.

⁵³ Ibid., 126.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ James Hefley, "State Conventions and Baptist Colleges." In *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention*, 2, 179-197.

Baptist conventions and ultimately the Baptist tradition. The universities were successful in changing their charters, such that only a portion of the trustees had to be either Baptist or chosen by the sponsoring state Baptist convention. The institutions obtained a level of academic prestige by initiating professional schools, thereby ensuring the support of wealthy alumni who could supply the colleges with strong endowments, thus reducing the need for monies from the state Baptist convention.⁵⁶ The student bodies became more religiously diverse, thus minimizing the number of ministerial students on campus, and the religion departments were comprised of liberal scholars who approached the study of theology from a liberal arts approach rather than a systematic theology approach.⁵⁷

Hefley chronicles the actions of Baptist college students and student papers at Baptist colleges that called attention to Baptists. Conservative pastors became interested in the student life found on the campuses of the Baptist colleges in the 1980s, often criticizing the hosting of rock concerts, pro-choice advertisements in student papers, and views on pre-marital sex. As the Conservative Resurgence unfolded, figures within the state Baptist conventions began to more closely monitor the state colleges as conservative appointees took seats on boards of trustees. This often made for problematic relations between administrators and the clergy.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Ibid., 181.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 187.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 188.

Hefley describes the growing dissent among Baptist state conventions and their colleges in the 1980s. Many of the institutions had improved their academic reputations in the second half of the twentieth century. This meant that specialized faculty attached to graduate programs, many of whom were not Baptist, filled the faculty. For a period it seems the diversity among the faculty ranks and the freedom among the student populace mirrored the developments in state colleges and universities.⁵⁹ But as Hefley points out those involved in the Conservative Resurgence and interested in reining in the seminaries voiced the same issues with the colleges.

Hefley reviews fifty-one operable Baptist colleges in 1987 that had solid educational programs as well as secure finances. But he asserts that the various state Baptist convention-supported colleges differed in terms of governance, philosophy of education, and theology.⁶⁰ Forty-seven of the colleges had boards of governance nominated and elected by the respective state Baptist conventions. Mercer University, William Jewel College, and The University of Richmond's boards were self-perpetuating, with the conventions merely approving their nominees; Wake Forest University was completely independent, Baptist in heritage only.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Ibid., 195.

⁶⁰ James Hefley, "Missouri Baptist, Mercer, and Samford: Three Schools in Controversy." In *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention*, 3 (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1987), 178-203.

⁶¹ Ibid., 180.

Surveying the spectrum, Hefley argues that some of the affiliated colleges leaned toward indoctrination, with others preferring an open inquiry method similar to that applied in the state colleges, and finally some opting for a combination of both educational models. The author contends that a handful of the colleges were either hard right or hard left, with the rest falling somewhere in the middle. Hefley suggests that in 1987, three particular colleges represented each paradigm within the constellation of Baptist colleges.

Hefley paints Mercer University as hard left, with a board and president firmly committed to academic freedom, permissive student life policies, and enough financial stability to snub the Georgia Baptist Convention's annual gifts of better than 2 million dollars. Hefley identifies Missouri Baptist College as hard right, with the president having been praised for curbing liberal theology and the teaching of evolution. Finally, Samford University is treated as a case study of a Baptist college trying to appease both sides of the theological spectrum with some success.⁶²

Hefley's work is valuable because it indicates that the Baptist college world of the 1980s was one of diversity, with the various colleges carving out an educational purpose regardless of theological bent. In thinking about what would happen in the 1990s and into the 2000s, one can see that the colleges with a hard right constituency such as Missouri Baptist were most likely to comply with their sponsors. The same course was followed at Louisiana College, Shorter College, Union University, and Oklahoma Baptist University. Mercer University, with its flurry of professional programs and strong endowment, would sever ties with the Georgia Baptist Convention. Furman University

⁶² Ibid., 184.

and Belmont University followed suit and severed ties with their respective state Baptist conventions.⁶³ Arguably well into the 2010s, Samford University has continued the middle passage it assumed in the late 1980s. The same can be said for Mississippi College and the Texas Baptist colleges.

Hefley explains, from the Conservative perspective, why Southern Baptists were delayed in their battle over the issue of inerrancy, addressing it more than three-quarters of a century later than their Presbyterian colleagues.⁶⁴ First, most Southern Baptists were conservative and subscribed to biblical inerrancy until the post-World War II era. Second, once diversity of thought emerged, Southern Baptist agency heads conspired to promote a “unity in spite of diversity” approach. This context is helpful understanding how a book written in 1961 by seminary professor Ralph Elliot that included references to the book of Genesis containing “parables” did not turn the organization and its higher education entities into a complete firestorm in the 1960s. Hefley, citing a variety of personal letters and memos, suggests that there was a group of conservative but unity loving leaders within the denomination who were most concerned about preserving the status quo. Thus, the denomination operated without incident for decades, even though some among the faculty ranks at the seminaries believed the Bible to be correct in theological matters, although not in science or historical matters.⁶⁵

⁶³ Ibid., 199.

⁶⁴ James Hefley, “How the Controversy Came About.” In *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention*, 5, 13-27.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

Hefley suggests that a grassroots effort by conservative pastors ultimately landed the hard right a presidency in 1979, one that was used to appoint nominating committee members who would ultimately demand that “inerrancy only” be advocated at the seminaries. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, as “inerrantists” gained political power and acumen, the denomination’s theological parameters were tightened, ultimately redrawn, throwing the denomination’s educational entities into crisis.⁶⁶ No longer was a neo-orthodox approach to the Bible (meaning a belief in the essential message of salvation, not the details) permitted.

Hefley’s work also explains how Southern Baptist colleges and seminaries employed scholars who were later castigated as “heretics.” For a period of time, roughly from the 1950s through the 1970s and into the 1980s, religious or theological orthodoxy in Southern Baptist life was easier to maintain. One could espouse a belief in the Bible as the source for matters of faith without ever acknowledging one’s beliefs about its applicability to science and historical fact and survive, even merit tenure. Thus, the environment was ripe for crisis and controversy once the old flexible lines were redrawn.

Joel Gregory, the successor to W.A. Criswell, and arguably the leading figure in the Conservative Resurgence, was pastor of what was in the late 1980s the nation’s largest Southern Baptist Church, First Baptist Church Dallas. In the early 1990s, Gregory chronicled his experiences within SBC life. In his book, *Too Great A Temptation: The Seductive Power of America’s Super Church*, Gregory outlines the conservatives’ theory

⁶⁶ Ibid., 25.

as to how the “liberal drift” occurred at the affiliated seminaries.⁶⁷ According to Gregory, some of the graduates of the seminaries opted to complete their education at Harvard University or Union Theological Seminary in New York. There, they were introduced to the historical-critical method. Upon the completion of their terminal degrees, they returned as faculty at Baptist seminaries, where they adapted enough of the ideas about the historical method so as to “pass” as orthodox.⁶⁸ Their brighter students were recruited, sent off to the finishing schools, and became the next generation of Southern Baptist scholars. According to Gregory, Criswell was among the first voices calling for changes at the affiliated seminaries. This book is helpful because the same claims were made about Louisiana College’s religion faculty members, essentially that they slipped in the critical views of scriptures and influenced the next generation of preachers. Perhaps Leon Hyatt saw himself as a kind of Louisiana version of Criswell.

Russell Moore contends that the Baptists who were a part of the Conservative Resurgence are more in line theologically with the first Baptists and those who came to North America from England than the moderates who have often claimed to follow the freedoms proclaimed by the early Baptists.⁶⁹ He suggests that conservatives have long been considered “rogues” in the denomination, even by those holding significant positions of influence, offering Russell Dilday, the longtime and ultimately dismissed

⁶⁷ Joel Gregory, *Too Great a Temptation: The Seductive Power of America’s Super Church*. (Fort Worth: The Summit Group, 1994), 66.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Russell Moore, “Baptist After All: Resurgent Conservatives Face the Future. In Moore, R. and Nettles T. (Ed.) *Why I am a Baptist*, (Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2001), 233, 246.

president of The Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, located in Dallas, as an example. Moore writes that as a college student he was pushed into rejecting biblical inerrancy as a fundamentalist belief rather than a Baptist one. Ultimately, Moore suggests he found within the early Baptist confessions of faith, a commitment to the Bible as “without error.”⁷⁰

Moore suggests that the twentieth century included self-proclaimed Baptists, the likes of Harry Emerson Fosdick and Will Campbell, who distorted the meaning of being Baptist. Concessions on issues like baptism by immersion only by the aforementioned, along with others on church discipline and soul freedom, have redefined the meaning of Baptist.⁷¹ For Moore, the Conservative Resurgence paved the way for salvaging the once threatened denomination. The author critiques moderates within the Baptist ranks for not taking the Bible either literally or seriously.

Moore makes a compelling argument as to why Baptists who “take the Bible literally” must follow suit in applying the Bible they believe to be so perfect to every area of their lives. This offers the student of Southern Baptist higher education a peek inside the brain of a chief figure in Southern Baptist life, as Moore has recently been named president of the denomination’s center for religious liberty earlier this year. He offers a systematic theology that obviously makes the operation of a higher education entity much simpler, for his worldview is such that there are no grey areas of mystery.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 248.

⁷¹ Ibid.

The Controversy for Moderates

A number of self-avowed moderate Southern Baptists, many of them members of the clergy and previously employed at the various agencies and seminaries, have written their perspectives on the struggle ensuing at various seminaries in the 1980s and 1990s, offering analyses of what precipitated the change. Their work touches on the issue of the colleges. According to Fisher Humphreys, Southern Baptists today are shaped by the beliefs espoused by their radical sixteenth century forerunners, the Anabaptists. Drawing on the sociologist Ernst Troelsch's religious typologies, church-type and sect-type, he suggests that some Baptists are more acculturated than other Baptists.⁷² Church-types are comfortable in larger society and are comfortable making contributions. Sect-types, however, are not at home in progressive culture and resist it at every turn. Humphreys contends that the growth in the Southern Baptist Convention following the Civil War resulted in Southern Baptists becoming church-types, to the point of participating in national and international ecumenical societies.

As the twentieth century unfolded, with the ascension of modernism, the emphasis on the natural sciences, recognition of women's rights and shifting gender roles, increases in gambling, alcohol, and drugs, elements within the Southern Baptist Convention began to return to the language of the sect-type.⁷³ This is evidenced in a number of resolutions passed by the SBC, ranging from those on gender roles to the boycotting of Disney World. Since the late 1970s, the Southern Baptist Convention has

⁷² Fisher Humphreys, "Anabaptist Beliefs." In *The Way We Were: How Southern Baptist Theology Has Changed and What It Means to Us All*, (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 61-65.

⁷³ Ibid., 63.

withdrawn from ecumenical bodies because some members adhered to liberal theology. The departure from the Baptist World Alliance is a prime example.⁷⁴

Humphreys' work provides insight into the sociological and historical forces that have pushed and pulled Southern Baptists one way or another over the past decade. Southern Baptist higher education has often been promoted by its administrators as a "different kind of education." This led to the use of phrases in promotional materials such as an education from a Christian worldview or an education informed by the Christian faith. Humphrey's chapter on Anabaptist beliefs enables one to see why Southern Baptists have been comfortable being separate from the larger higher education paradigm.

Humphreys also writes about the impact of fundamentalism on the SBC since the turn of twentieth century.⁷⁵ Humphreys challenges the notion that fundamentalism was the product of Southern resistance, suggesting that the phenomenon was actually a Northern ideology, first espoused by scholars at Princeton's seminary, including J. Gresham Machen, B.B. Warfield, and Charles Hodge. The source of the controversy was resistance to the historical critical method of interpreting the Bible. Humphreys suggests that Baptists were cooperative with other Protestant denominations in the early twentieth century iteration of fundamentalism, and he notes four elements of the movement: a belief in biblical inerrancy; premillennialism, a belief in the imminent and bodily return of Jesus Christ to the earth; revivalism, a belief in the need for a radical conversion to the

⁷⁴ Ibid., 65.

⁷⁵ Fisher Humphreys, "Fundamentalist Beliefs." In *The Way We Were: How Southern Baptist Theology Has Changed and What It Means to Us All*, (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2002), 87-97.

Christian faith; and holiness, that Christians should live their lives in strict devotion to biblical teachings. Humphreys suggests there was also a commitment to militant rejection of theological liberalism.

According to Humphreys, not all Southern Baptists became fundamentalists in the early part of twentieth century, partly because liberalism was not as present in their churches and agencies and colleges and seminaries which were largely located in the South which was slower in adopting progressive views about science and the Bible. The issue of inerrancy, more than holiness or premillennialism or Revivalism, ultimately became the issue for Southern Baptists in the 1970s.⁷⁶ According to Humphreys, the Princeton theologians, essentially a century earlier, sowed the seeds for the controversy by adopting the idea that the Bible is infallible in all matter, even science, in the face of claims being made by progressive scholars who subscribed to the higher criticism.

Humphreys' essay ties the controversy in Southern Baptist higher education which arose in the second half of the twentieth century to the religious debates occurring in the North in the latter part of the nineteenth century. This lens indicates that the struggle in the South was really not so much different from the one in the North. The outcome of the debacle, at least for Southern Baptists, is where the differences lay.

Bill Leonard offers a comprehensive sketch from the moderate point of view of the fragmentation of the SBC's seminaries.⁷⁷ For Leonard, the fragmentation began long before the 1960s and 1970s, where some historians trace the rift. Citing T. T. Martin's

⁷⁶ Ibid., 91.

⁷⁷ Bill Leonard, *God's Last and Only Hope: The Fragmentation of the Southern Baptist Convention*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 121.

1925 proposal to split the SBC over the then SBC Educational Association's non-literal stance, Leonard suggests that the issues were the same in the 1920s as they were in the latter part of the twentieth century: evolution versus creationism and biblical inerrancy versus the historical critical method.⁷⁸ He credits moderate rhetoric, a spiritualizing of words, for keeping the denomination intact for the next four decades.

For Leonard, the moderates ultimately lacked the charismatic personality of their conservative counterparts. He cites figures, among them Rodgers, Criswell, and Stanley, "masters of the pulpits," who identified with average Southern Baptists who rejected Modernism. According to Leonard, politics in the SBC in the 1970s was supported by a trifecta: individualism; congregational autonomy; and populism.⁷⁹ The charismatic SBC pastors viewed compromise, the glue holding the SBC intact, as heresy, essentially unity at the price of truth.⁸⁰ Leonard links their involvement in the founding of the Baptist Faith and Message Fellowship in 1973 as a means to monitor the SBC agencies for compliance with *1963 Baptist Faith and Message* and to awaken the denomination to the presence of liberalism.⁸¹ He suggests that the conservative takeover of the SBC Pastors' Conference in 1977 offered them a forum, conveniently one that preceded the annual Southern Baptist Convention and held in the same venue, to attack liberalism in seminaries and promote their answer: a political agenda.⁸²

⁷⁸ Ibid., 134.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 123.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 134.

⁸¹ Ibid., 135.

⁸² Ibid.

As the 1980s unfolded, theological education and denominational politics clashed over the balance between graduate education and spiritual formation, with many of the professors at the affiliated seminaries leery of the pressures being exerted by the conservatives. The conservative SBC leadership insisted that clergy needed to be credentialed, but that congregations needed to be reassured that the seminary education had not “changed them.”⁸³

For Leonard, the “Peace Committee,” which was comprised of moderates and conservatives for the purpose of investigating the seminary personnel, gave the conservatives the ammunition they needed to effect complete change at the seminaries. The results of the review found that Southern Baptist seminary professors, like the denomination they represented, held varying interpretations of the Bible.⁸⁴ For example, some affirmed the Genesis account of creation as literal, while others maintained it was representative; some affirmed every biblical event as historic, while others employed a critical interpretation. Some accepted the traditional authors of the books, while others did not; and some saw the miracles as literal, others held them to be symbolic.⁸⁵ Leonard’s assessment is that the efforts of the seminary presidents to compromise with the new SBC leadership in their “Glorieta Statement,” in which they pledged to hire some inerrantists for faculty positions, effectively backfired, as conservatives were able to spin the results of the Peace Committee investigations and Glorieta Statement as evidence of a

⁸³ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 144.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

“problem.”⁸⁶ Moving forward, the chief issue for hiring, promoting, and maintaining faculty was their acceptance of inerrancy.⁸⁷

In summary, the Southern Baptist Convention, not unlike other denominations, did not emerge from the modernist-fundamentalist controversy as a denomination that was either fundamentalist or modernist, rather it was made up of both perspectives. As some of the literature cited in this chapter indicates, there were some efforts on the behalf of fundamentalists to expel modernists during the 1920s, but in the end tolerance was shown for the progressive voices within the SBC. As the denomination grew throughout the 1950s, peace was maintained, largely because those who wielded power in key denominational positions recognized that unity was best for the organization’s goals of mission work and education.

During the 1960s, however, the fundamentalist voices began to decry the progressive theology that dominated the SBC’s six affiliated seminaries. Perhaps dismissed as the moaning of malcontents at the time, these voices found support among thousands of Southern Baptists who credited liberalism for social upheaval and cultural changes. This was not unlike what happened when fundamentalism reared its head following the Civil War.

By the end of the 1970s, the fundamentalist voices had united with other conservative Evangelical voices within the SBC, such that they were successful in electing an inerrantist as president of the denomination. Because the SBC president had significant control over the affiliated seminaries, the successive election of conservative

⁸⁶ Ibid., 146.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 149.

SBC presidents during the 1980s caused great friction for the institutions. At first, the moderate presidents resisted the efforts to suppress academic freedom. They next sought compromise, and finally they capitulated to the demands that all seminary faculty teach in accordance with biblical inerrancy. Many faculty members found other institutions, including Baptist colleges, to serve as they could not cope with the new definitions of academic freedom. One could argue that by the mid-1990s, the seminaries had been remade into new institutions, with new methods for educating clergy.

The experience for the Baptist colleges has varied. Because the SBC does not own any of the colleges, their individual fate has depended largely on their state Baptist convention's theological persuasion, whether conservative or moderate, the governance structure, whether completely or partially controlled by the state convention, and financial health. For a handful of Baptist colleges, such as Mercer University, Baylor University, and Belmont University, independence from their state conventions was negotiated to avoid the kind of institutional turmoil that plagued the seminaries during the 1980s. For other colleges, such as Mississippi College and Samford University, the state conventions, while contributing millions of dollars to the annual operating budget, have largely delegated the operation of the colleges to their respective administrations. But for a small group of colleges, the experience has mirrored that of the seminaries. Louisiana College, Oklahoma Baptist University, and Shorter University have all experienced the redefinition of academic freedom, the loss of faculty, either by choice or force, financial exigency in the wake of the negative publicity, and difficulty in maintaining regional accreditation.

CHAPTER IV

CONSERVATIVE RESURGENCE CONCERNS AND INITIAL PRESSURE

James Hefley indicates in his work on the SBC's Conservative Resurgence that there were some negative issues brewing at Louisiana College in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹ Conservative pastors were annoyed that their nomination of an inerrantist to fill the chair of the department of religion was seemingly ignored by President Robert Lynn. Rumors were also circulating that Lynn was considering proposing a covenant relationship between the College and Louisiana Baptist Convention, which if accepted, would grant Louisiana College the ability to select its trustees largely independent of the convention.² It appears that Lynn and other moderates, including some on the board of trustees, were committed to resisting pressure from the Conservative Resurgence. Sellers Aycock, then a member of the board of trustees, circulated a letter in the summer of 1990, asking for potential members for a counterinsurgency group to be called "Friends of Louisiana College," to represent the College in the state's geographic areas.³

¹James Hefley, "Struggles in the States." In *The Truth in Crisis: The Controversy in The Southern Baptist Convention*, Volume 5 (Hannibal, MO: Hannibal Books, 1990), 123-142.

² Ibid.

³ Sellers Aycock to George Haile, July 2, 1990, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA . Sellers Aycock served on the Louisiana College Board of Trustees for many years, including a stint as chairman. George Haile was pastor of the University Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, a moderate congregation, also later affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. In this letter Aycock outlines the need for some organized opposition, in the form of an alumni/friends group to be called "Friends of Louisiana College," to combat the emerging Louisiana Baptist Conservative Resurgency group.

A fall 1991 chapel address by President Lynn on the topic of academic freedom includes some mention of persons questioning the textbooks and materials used by professors.⁴ Lynn's address includes a series of justifications for academic freedom, among them authenticity as an educational institution, satisfying principles for accreditation, honoring the 1940 AAUP Statement on Academic Freedom, and the improvement of society.⁵ But within his comments are a series of references to the larger struggle over academic freedom at Southern Baptist institutions and the pressure at Louisiana College. Lynn mentioned the demoralization of seminary faculty who felt that their academic freedom was threatened.⁶ He also made reference to his interactions with individuals who questioned materials chosen by the faculty, noting that his response was that the faculty member was in the best position to make a judgment on the appropriateness of textbook or supporting materials.⁷ Lynn compared outsiders questioning professors' choices of academic materials to one questioning a pastor's sermon preparation materials.⁸

⁴ Robert Lynn, "Academic Freedom and You," typescript of an address delivered at fall convocation at Louisiana College, Pineville, Louisiana, September 3, 1991, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Robert Lynn was president of Louisiana College from 1975-1996. This is an interesting speech, if for nothing but the timing. The speech contains references to the 1940 American Association of University Professors' 1940 statement on academic freedom.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid., 2.

⁷ Ibid., 3-4.

⁸ Ibid.

Lynn answered those who suggested that a Christian college exists only to serve the church by suggesting that while Louisiana College did serve the church by providing leadership via its graduates, the college had a higher calling: to enable students to seek and find truth, both of which required an environment of academic freedom.⁹ He suggested that as academic freedom increasingly came under fire, the college must better inform its constituencies of its justification and formulate policies which protect it.¹⁰ In closing, Lynn charged the students, trustees, and alumni with defending academic freedom at Louisiana College.¹¹

Some evidence of Lynn's references to pressure from the Conservative Resurgence are found in a memo addressed to him later that fall from Vice President of Academic Affairs Stan Lott.¹² Alan Miller, a clergyman, reported to Lott on a New Orleans meeting of clergymen in which Louisiana College was attacked for drifting toward liberalism in academics, where Tommy French, a Baton Rouge pastor, suggested that the college needed faculty members who would teach inerrancy.¹³ This same assertion was made about the seminaries during the 1980s. Some complained about the

⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 6.

¹² Stan Lott to Robert Lynn, personal memorandum, December 20, 1991, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Stan Lott was Vice President for Academic Affairs at Louisiana College from 1981-1996. This memo details a meeting of Louisiana Baptist clergyman held in New Orleans. The meeting included various speeches about the problems at Louisiana College, specifically the choice of textbooks by the religion faculty and the English faculty.

¹³ Ibid., 1.

student life activities on campus.¹⁴ Others complained that the larger Conservative Resurgence was having difficulty taking hold in Louisiana, while Larry Taylor, a moderate pastor, called the accusations rehearsed and dated.¹⁵ Lott closed his memo to Lynn by suggesting that the college rally supporters for a similar meeting scheduled to be held in Pineville in February, 1992.¹⁶

In the fall of 1993, the primary issue during the election of the new Louisiana Baptist Convention president (essentially a two-year term) was Louisiana College, with those who supported the college administration and faculty, “Friends of Louisiana College,” campaigning for Mark Short, and those who were aligned with the Louisiana Conservative Resurgence, stumping for David Hankins. Short prevailed, but those with grievances against the college did not retreat. In a letter to Short, Pastor Charles Hutzler called on Short to listen to students’ and pastors’ concerns about the teachings at Louisiana College.¹⁷ Hutzler argued that Short could not, as a true Christian, tolerate the religion professors questioning biblical miracles or the atonement of Christ, or MTV being available in the dormitories and rock music played in the campus eateries.¹⁸

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Charles Hutzler to Mark Short, November 23, 1993, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Charles Hutzler was longtime pastor of Alpine First Baptist Church, located near Pineville, Louisiana. Mark Short was elected president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in early November 1993. In this letter, Hutzler calls Short to take action against Louisiana College, lamenting the liberal views espoused by the faculty under the guise of “academic freedom.”

¹⁸ Ibid., 1.

Hutzler also took issue with the local press suggesting that Short's election was positive for the college, and that a Hankins presidency would have damaged Louisiana College and the area.¹⁹ He also wrote that Louisiana Baptists would ultimately discover that the true friends of Louisiana College were not those who helped defeat Hankins, rather those who "fought for truth and the integrity of God's word."²⁰ Hutzler questioned the political tactics of some of the academic departments that sent out letters to alumni, urging them to attend the Louisiana Baptist Convention meeting or otherwise support Short.²¹ His assessment was that the college's political action meant there was something to hide.²²

A non-election year for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, 1994 was a quiet one for Louisiana College, but 1995 proved to be the most politically charged of the decade. Some conservatives, a vocal minority, had been appointed to the board of trustees during Mark Short's LBC presidency. Perhaps this was a compromise of sorts. In February, trustee Darryl Hoychick, a Eunice-based pastor, sent a letter to like-minded trustees for the purpose of setting up a conference call, scheduled for February 20, in which the conservatives could discuss their agenda for the March board of trustees meeting.²³ He noted in his memo that while he believed they were a minority, there were enough conservative members on the board to make a difference, and he invited members to mail

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., 2.

²² Ibid.

²³ Darryl Hoychick to select members of the Louisiana College board of trustees, February 8, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

him any proposals or complaints they wanted to be discussed.²⁴ The conference call proposition was eventually leaked to the media, and when contacted by *The Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, Hoychick refused to discuss the details of the meeting, but did indicate that he was concerned that Louisiana College lacked a strong biblical religion department.²⁵

As a result of the meeting of select trustees in February, Friends of Louisiana College sent out a letter in March, asking for alumni and supporters to inform them of the growing pressure from conservative pastors. Not all agreed that the pressure was unwarranted. In a letter to Sue Tweedy, a Friend of Louisiana College, John Hoychick, brother of Darryl Hoychick, defended his brother's actions, painting him (Darryl) as an alumnus who was proud of Louisiana College's academic accomplishments but disappointed with the religion department.²⁶ Later that month, Leon Hyatt, a leader in the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency, visited President Lynn, telling him that the fall election of a new Louisiana Baptist president was going to be a "royal dogfight."²⁷ He hinted to Lynn that some compromise might be possible if the college would be willing to give in to issues concerning the Louisiana Conservative Resurgence, chief among them a conservative in the religion department, a chapel program with "heavy preaching," and for faculty to refrain from involvement with the moderate Cooperative Baptist

²⁴ Ibid., 1.

²⁵ "Conservative push: LC board members looking to the right," in *The Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, February 13 1995, clipping.

²⁶ John Hoychick to Sue Tweedy, March 9, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

²⁷ Robert Lynn to file, memorandum, March 27, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

Fellowship.²⁸ Lynn responded that he was willing to meet with the group, but that he doubted they would hear his side, given that he had talked with them in the past.²⁹ Lynn indicated that he was not opposed to an inerrantist in the religion department, although he believed the religion faculty to be conservative.³⁰ Lynn defended the chapel program and faculty members' right to attend the church or Christian organization of their choosing.³¹

While the initial criticism of Louisiana College concerned the department of religion, the humanities drew the ire of the conservative constituency. An incident that occurred during the fall 1994 LC-MC London Semester Program, a study abroad track that was co-sponsored by Louisiana College and Mississippi College, was characterized by pastor Rick Henson. He suggested that students were forced to attend the play, *Dead Funny*, which included full nudity and simulated sex; he further charged that students who chose to walk out of *Dead Funny* were assigned lower grades.³² The program director, Connie Douglass, responded that while there was brief nudity which the faculty was not aware of ahead of time, the notion of simulated sex was fabricated, and that the students' final grades were not reflective of their leaving the play.³³

²⁸ Ibid., 1.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Connie Douglass to Stan Lott and Robert Lynn, personal memorandum, April 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Connie Douglass was a longtime faculty member in the English department and the founder of the London Semester Program. She writes in response to an article that appeared in the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency group's newsletter.

³³ Ibid., 1.

There is some indication that as a result of the incident with *Dead Funny* the administration gave directives for the fall 1995 London Semester Program to safeguard against a similar incident.³⁴ This was not met with the applause of the faculty, some of whom saw the safeguarding as a means of censorship. Roseanna Osborne, who was Chair of the English department, compared the safeguarding to altering data in a laboratory or revising history to accommodate a particular bias.³⁵ Osborne elaborated on Christian education, arguing that she did not “believe the purpose of Christian education is to lead people to be moral cowards, those who scurry their eyes from anything that promises to be unsightly.”³⁶

Under Siege

In May, the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency as they initially referred to themselves published a “Covenant with Louisiana Baptists” in the state Baptist paper.³⁷ In their manifesto, they offered two goals related to Louisiana College. The first included the development of a process for Louisiana Baptists to ask College faculty and staff their

³⁴ Roseanne Osborne to Connie Douglass, personal e-mail, April 10, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Roseanne Osborne was the Chair of the English department. In this e-mail, she laments that academic freedom has been violated because steps had been taken to safeguard the fall 1995 London Semester Program.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ The Louisiana Conservative Resurgency to the *The Baptist Message*, editorial titled “Covenant with Louisiana Baptists,” May, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. The Louisiana Conservative Resurgency was a band of Louisiana Baptist clergyman who believed in innerancy and desired the Louisiana Baptist Convention to affirm it as a statement of faith and for Louisiana College faculty to teach in accordance with the doctrine. The group adopted a number of other names throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, including “Speaking the Truth in Love” and “The Louisiana Innerancy Fellowship or LIF.”

beliefs concerning central Christian doctrines: the Bible; Jesus's deity, virgin birth, atoning death, resurrection; and second coming, along with salvation by faith in Christ.³⁸ These are the same "essentials" outlined by Bell, Grey and Machen in the "Fundamentalist Credo." The second involved the outlining of a similar process for Louisiana Baptists to question faculty and staff about violations of traditional Christian values: the assignment or exposure to pornography, endorsement of homosexuality, acceptance of sexual impropriety, display of nudity, use of profane language, and advocating the pro-choice position.³⁹ The other two goals called for the Louisiana Baptist Convention to add an inerrancy clause to its constitution and for all Louisiana Baptist agency heads to require their staffs to affirm a commitment to inerrancy.⁴⁰ Thus, the Louisiana College controversy is one that must be considered within the wider struggle among Louisiana Baptists to follow or not follow the direction of the Southern Baptist Convention's Conservative Resurgence.

In June, Leon Hyatt published "You Need to Know about Louisiana College," a booklet more than twenty pages in length, comprised of letters from disgruntled students, detailing their experiences at Louisiana College.⁴¹ In the preface, Hyatt writes that his primary issues with the College were a religion department that advocated critical views

³⁸ Ibid., 1.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Leon Hyatt to Louisiana Baptist churches, booklet titled "You Need to Know about Louisiana College," June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. The booklet contains twenty letters written by former Louisiana College students, detailing their experiences in the religion and English departments. Most of the letters are written about the theological ideas and historical-critical method referenced by religion faculty.

of the Bible, moral issues with some of the teaching materials used in the English department and the humanities, and the administration and trustees who were committed to covering up the problems rather than addressing them.⁴² It is important to note the sources of the letters compiled by Hyatt in his booklet. In total there are twenty letters addressed to Louisiana Baptists, of which six were written by Baptist ministers, eight by former students who became pastors, one from a former female student, and three from former male non-ministerial students, one by a former Louisiana Baptist Convention employee, and one from a local insurance agent. The majority of the letters criticize the use of modern biblical scholarship, in particular the historical-critical method, in religion courses. A number of the letters question the required general education course, human faith and values, propagating secular ethics. There is also mention of the emphasis on the college's academic reputation over its spiritual atmosphere.

In his letter, Carlton Vance, a pastor and former Louisiana College employee, suggested that materialistic values had become the measure of the college's success rather than spiritual discipline.⁴³ It is unclear as to whether Vance was referring to the emphasis on academic reputation. Vance recalled a conversation he allegedly had with a fellow employee in the early 1970s in which the other staff member said referring to Louisiana College as a Christian college was a means of fooling themselves.⁴⁴ David Hankins, who was then pastor of Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles and who currently serves as Executive Director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, wrote that

⁴² Carlton Vance to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

the textbooks chosen for religion courses undermined the trustworthiness of the scriptures.⁴⁵ He referenced *David's Truth*, which suggests that the historical events of King David's life were likely fabricated by the tribe of Judah.⁴⁶ Hankins also mentioned an Old Testament survey textbook, required of all students, that questioned the story of Joseph being sold into slavery.⁴⁷

Former New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary extension student J. Michael Barnett, who took a master's level Hebrew course under religion and philosophy professor Fred Downing, recalled that Downing, in explaining a textual issue in Genesis, quipped that this was a place where the documentary hypothesis, a critical theory of authorship suggesting various sources rather than the traditional Mosaic point of view, should be applied.⁴⁸ Barnett noted that this was evidence that Louisiana College did not take a firm stance on issues of biblical inspiration.⁴⁹ Another former student and pastor, Bill Robertson mentioned Fred Downing in his letter, accusing Downing of saying the Bible was no more valuable than any other book on religion.⁵⁰ He also recalled walking out of a movie shown in the faith and human values course taught by Downing because

⁴⁵ David Hankins to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ J. Michael Barnett to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Bill Robertson to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

the film contained profanity.⁵¹ Robertson referenced being told by another unnamed professor that the crucifixion was an afterthought in God's plan, and that Abraham was never told to offer up his son Isaac as a sacrifice.⁵²

Larry Hubbard, who was also a ministerial student, wrote of his experiences with religion professors. He indicated that Carlton Winbery, who was chair of the department of religion and philosophy, in a New Testament survey course required of all students, offered alternate views on the authorship of several letters of the New Testament, including a number of those typically ascribed to the Apostle Paul.⁵³ Hubbard questioned Winbery's assertion that God did not kill Ananias and Sapphira as is recorded in the Book of Acts, calling it an example of an attack on the Bible.⁵⁴ He also referenced statements allegedly made by Jim Heath in the survey of Old Testament course, offering a thesis that God did not kill various groups of people, rather it was the interpretation of the events offered by the Israelite author.⁵⁵ Hubbard said that his experience was such that he transferred to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary where he could study under professors who did not deny the Bible.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Larry Hubbard to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Former student Jimmy Fontenot wrote that Jesus Christ was no longer the focus at Louisiana College, suggesting that Jesus was rarely mentioned in chapels or classes, even religion courses.⁵⁷ Fontenot criticized the weekly chapel program as being dominated by political speakers.⁵⁸ Fontenot argued that the primary focus for Louisiana College was intellectual growth.⁵⁹ Similar to Hubbard, Fontenot suggested that the religion faculty pushed critical theories and ignored books by conservative authors.⁶⁰ Minister and former Louisiana Baptist Convention employee John Winters criticized the chapel program for only requiring students to attend once per week, comparing his experience at another Baptist college where he was required to attend three times per week.⁶¹ He questioned the content of chapel as well, suggesting that when speakers were preachers they were not allowed to give an invitation out of respect for other faiths.⁶² Pastor Carroll Marr wrote of his experience preaching the annual College revival in 1994. He complained that the revival was poorly attended by both faculty and students, which he attributed to the event not being a priority across campus, with exams and other events scheduled during the weeklong revival.⁶³

⁵⁷ Jimmy Fontenot to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ John Winters to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Carroll Marr to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

Former student, Ken Davis, wrote of his experience in the late 1980s. A non-traditional ministerial student, David indicated that he had given up his career as a cabinet maker to train for ministry.⁶⁴ While taking an art course, Davis was invited to attend an art show in Houston with his unnamed art professor.⁶⁵ Davis alleged that during the trip, the male professor made sexual advances toward him, which he reported to his pastor upon returning to Pineville.⁶⁶ According to Davis, he later learned that the professor was homosexual and the college had known about it and done nothing for years.⁶⁷ He cited this as a reason for dropping out of Louisiana College and giving up on his dream of becoming a minister.⁶⁸

Former ministerial student Gregory Griffin provided an account of his experience taking English 101 with Connie Douglass. He complained of reading a work by noted Black author James Baldwin which included a description of a character visiting a pornographic movie cinema where he received sexual advances from other men.⁶⁹ According to Griffin, the story told of the character's experiences as a homosexual.⁷⁰ Other issues in the course cited by Griffin include a group project in which one group

⁶⁴ Ken Davis to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Gregory Griffin to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

demonstrated AIDS prevention by putting a condom on a banana.⁷¹ Griffin, toward the end of his letter, conceded that the course was rigorous, and that Douglass helped him improve his writing skills.⁷²

Pastor Phillip Smith, who attended Louisiana College for a single semester, during the fall of 1978, wrote that his experience was so poor that he transferred to Ouachita Baptist University.⁷³ Smith found Fred Downing's faith and human values course to be a threat to his faith. He alleged that Fred Downing told students the Bible was no more important than any other religious text, and suggested that profanity was a good way to relieve stress.⁷⁴ Smith also noted a statement made by Anthony Quinn in the movie *Zorba the Greek*, a film shown in the values course, "The only sin that a man can't get forgiveness for is when he knows a widow woman is sleeping alone and he will not go and sleep with her."⁷⁵ Reverend Jerry Dark also recalled attending Louisiana College for a single semester, the fall of 1991. Dark complained that the general education course, Western Civilization, offered theistic evolution as a theory.⁷⁶ He reported that the use of the historical-critical method angered him, and that President Lynn noted in a chapel address that closed-minded people from North Louisiana were a threat to the

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Phillip Smith to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Jerry Dark to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

College.⁷⁷ Dark's chief complaint was what he found among his fellow ministerial students who were a part of the Christian Vocation Fellowship; he alleged that ministerial students went to bars and nightclubs.⁷⁸ For Dark, his Louisiana College experience did not match what he said was promised when he met with an admissions counselor.⁷⁹

Former student Mark Russell wrote that he left Louisiana College because of his experience in the faith and human values course.⁸⁰ He found the course to undermine what he was taught in Baptist Sunday School and the reading assignments included descriptions of inappropriate sexual behaviors.⁸¹ According to Russell, he met with Fred Downing and Connie Douglass to discuss their justification for the assignments and readings.⁸² Russell alleged that the professors defended the course, and that his father, a music minister, met with President Lynn who allegedly dismissed him as an alarmist.⁸³ Russell enrolled at East Texas Baptist University in the fall of 1981.⁸⁴

Reverend Jeff Pardue offered a litany of complaints about his experience at Louisiana College, ranging from the student body to his academic courses. Pardue complained that he was offered a subscription to *Playboy* at freshmen registration, and

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Mark Russell to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

too many students smoked cigarettes.⁸⁵ According to Pardue, he initially enrolled in religion and philosophy as his course of study, but found that the philosophy professors advocated situational ethics rather than absolutes.⁸⁶ He described the religion courses as liberal, criticizing theories offered in the biblical archaeological courses that suggested that Abraham may have been an “expression of faith” and not necessarily a real person.⁸⁷ Pardue ultimately changed his major to English with which he found a series of problems. For his first English course, Pardue reported that he was required to read *The Tongues of Angels* by Reynold Price, a book that includes a scene in which a camp counselor watches young boys take a shower and references masturbation.⁸⁸ According to Pardue, he complained such that President Lynn ultimately had the book removed from the required reading list.⁸⁹ For the American writers’ course, Pardue was required to read *The Great Gatsby*, *My Antonia*, and *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, among others, books that Pardue denoted as propagating immorality and ungodliness.⁹⁰ He complained again to President Lynn who urged him to first meet with his professor to express his concerns.⁹¹

⁸⁵ Jeff Pardue to to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 16.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 15.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 16.

Pardue wrote that his meeting with his professor was counterproductive as the professor argued that it was not inappropriate to require reading of literature with references to behaviors inconsistent with the college mission.⁹² He did concede, however, that the professor gave him an alternative list of readings, one with texts he found less offensive to his worldview.⁹³

Stephanie Dunbar provided the lone letter from a former female student. While she found her academic instruction to be challenging, she believed there to be serious moral and doctrinal issues.⁹⁴ Dunbar chronicled presentations on Andres Serranos' "Piss on Christ" as particularly offensive in her art appreciation course.⁹⁵ Upon telling her parents about the course, they contacted President Lynn who defended the arts while promising that the instructor would be more careful.⁹⁶ As other students had, Dunbar criticized the content of her Old Testament survey course, especially books utilized by Fred Downing, including Paul Tillich's *The Shaking of the Foundations*, Rabbi Harold Kushner's *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, and James Fowler's *Stages of Faith*.⁹⁷

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Stephanie Dunbar to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Local pastor Wayne Kite wrote that he was disappointed to learn, upon moving to Pineville, that Louisiana College professors were prescribing liberal views of the Bible.⁹⁸ He decided to visit the college and express concern over issues that students who attended his church were sharing with him, but was surprised to find that he was perceived as an enemy rather than a pastor and friend who wanted to help.⁹⁹ Kite ended his letter by suggesting that conservatives could no longer remain silent, that a response was merited and the root of the issues needed to be addressed.¹⁰⁰ Former ministerial student, Stephen Richardson, who was a Louisiana Baptist Convention employee at the time of his letter recounted being forced to watch a movie with full frontal nudity simulating a sexual encounter while taking the faith and human values course.¹⁰¹ He noted that President Lynn's response to the content was to indicate that such materials were necessary in a liberal arts college.¹⁰²

Reverend Rick Henson wrote of his experience attending the play *J.B.* Among issues cited were characters in the play drinking alcohol which Henson said suggested that one could drink and be a moral person.¹⁰³ Henson also lamented a dialogue among

⁹⁸ Wayne Kite to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Stephen Richardson to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁰³ Rick Henson to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

characters that included a sexual joke.¹⁰⁴ Henson's major issue with the play was J.B.'s rejection of both God and Satan in the final act, which Henson said promoted a humanistic message.¹⁰⁵ Local pastor Charles Hutzler also wrote about the play *J.B.* Referencing a letter that appeared in the local newspaper describing a discussion on a potential play policy in light of Henson's complaints, Hutzler questioned why the faculty, staff, and administration needed such a policy to determine what was appropriate for the Louisiana College theatre.¹⁰⁶

The final letter in Hyatt's packet is one written by local insurance agent Virgil Ayers.¹⁰⁷ Ayers complained about the legacy of President Lynn, referencing a comment Lynn made upon becoming president.¹⁰⁸ He contended that Lynn's response to a question by a reporter about Louisiana College being a "Holy Hill." Lynn is alleged to have said the image was dead.¹⁰⁹ Ayers accused Lynn of secularizing the college in the name of academic prestige, ending his note with a wish that the holy hill would raise from the dead.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Charles Hutzler to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁰⁷ Virgil Ayres to Louisiana Baptists, letter, June, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

The College Responds

A secondary challenge for the college, aside from the pressure from the conservatives on the board, was the intense media coverage, with articles appearing in the local paper, state Baptist paper, and other Baptist publications. This had to be a concern in terms of student recruitment for the fall freshmen class, and also as a matter needing constant responses. In the weeks following the circulation of Leon Hyatt's packet of letters to the media and Louisiana Baptist churches, there was an internal and external response. A number of faculty members wrote to President Lynn and Vice President Lott, answering the allegations made about them in the letters. James Heath, professor of religion, wrote in response to Larry Hubbard's letter which mentioned his Old Testament survey course.¹¹¹ Heath suggested that Hubbard's letter failed to provide the context in which comments were made.¹¹² Hubbard had accused Heath of saying that not all statements in the Bible were true, especially those made in the Old Testament, giving God credit for killing a group of people.¹¹³ In his response, Heath said that his aim was to show students that many of the wide sweeping declarative statements could be attributed to an ancient people who credited or blamed a deity for every occurrence in life.¹¹⁴ Heath said his ultimate goal was to help students interpret difficult Old Testament passages in light of a reading of the entire Bible, a practice that he said had been utilized

¹¹¹ Jim Heath to Stan Lott, personal memorandum, June 27, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Jim Heath was a longtime professor in the department of religion.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

for interpretation since the Protestant Reformation.¹¹⁵ He believed this would help students balance the conflict between the vengeful God of the Old Testament and Jesus' teachings on loving enemies in the New Testament.¹¹⁶ Heath reported that he always made it clear to students that they had the right to interpret the statements for themselves, arguing that his approach was both educationally sound and theologically consistent with the Baptist principle of individuals being free to interpret the Bible for themselves.¹¹⁷

Stan Poole, a professor of English, wrote to Vice President Lott concerning Jeff Pardue's letter about his English courses and their assigned readings.¹¹⁸ Poole argued that Pardue's claims about *The Tongues of Angels* were full of distortions and misleading claims: that the novel was not about homosexuality, rather self-consciousness and puberty. The references to masturbation in the novel were mere reflections of the adolescent world of the novel, and that the message of the novel with a setting at a Christian camp was a profound reverence for God and recognition of the spiritual dimension of life.¹¹⁹

Poole also took exception with Pardue's claims that his complaining to President Lynn caused *The Tongues of Angles* to be removed from the required reading list; in practice, the English department never repeated novels from one semester to the next, so

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹¹⁸ Stan Poole to Stan Lott, personal memorandum, July 3, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

as to avoid issues with plagiarism.¹²⁰ As for Pardue's complaints about the American writers' course, Poole answered that Pardue's position was so extreme that very few American classics would be acceptable to him.¹²¹ Poole offered much commentary in his response on the issue of having students read literature with content that is contrary to biblical teachings, arguing that if one were to censor assignments for immoral content then the Bible itself would be banned!¹²² For Poole, the exposure to literature was a means of introducing students to evil and its consequences which they may have yet to encounter in their own lives.¹²³ Poole ended his rebuttal with a warning that banning texts because of content would be detrimental for Louisiana College, leaving students ignorant of cultural knowledge, robbing the College of its academic excellence, hindering the marketability of graduates, and depriving students of the opportunity to learn how to grapple with the world depicted in literature.¹²⁴

Carlton Winbery, chair of the religion department, wrote a lengthy memo to Vice President Lott, offering an analysis of *The Covenant with Louisiana Baptists* and Hyatt's packet and combating the accusations made against him.¹²⁵ He accused Hyatt of moving

¹²⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 5.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 7.

¹²⁵ Carlton Winbery to Stan Lott, memorandum, July 11, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Carlton Winbery, chair of the department of religion, responds to statements he allegedly made in his courses in New Testament. He also offers some analysis of the recently released "*Covenant with Louisiana Baptists*" by the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency group.

toward creedalism by requiring Louisiana Baptist agency employees to affirm their commitment to the Bible as truth without any mixture of error.¹²⁶ Winbery contended that the omission of three words at the end of the clause, “for its matter,” had been interpreted as matters of faith and spirit, thus precluding the notion that the Bible was correct in matters of science or history.¹²⁷ For Winbery, Hyatt’s goal was to force anyone who did not accept his radical views on the Bible to leave or be fired.¹²⁸ While Winbery indicated that he and the rest of the Louisiana College faculty affirmed the basic truths behind the doctrines of the Christian faith, students needed to be able to explain what they mean rather than offer yes or no answers.¹²⁹

In response to the booklet, Winbery argued that Hyatt had made several sweeping statements without full knowledge.¹³⁰ He said that he did permit the use of tape recorders in his class, but that he asked that the tapes not be edited such that context could be left out of what might be presented to a third party listener.¹³¹ Concerning Larry Hubbard’s statements about the authorship of the pastoral letters, Winbery defended the exposure to alternative theories other than Pauline authorship, noting that even the most conservative introductions to the New Testament offer discussions on authorship.¹³² His concern was

¹²⁶ Ibid., 1.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

that without knowledge of various points of view, the students would be at a disadvantage when they went to seminary.¹³³ Winbery indicated that his courses always included texts from various angles, so as to offer a balance, and that students were invited to draw their own conclusions after having been exposed to the evidence.¹³⁴ As for Hubbard's assertion that Winbery attacked the Bible by suggesting that God did not kill Ananias and Sapphira, he argued he was misquoted, that what he really suggested was that the text not be used to say that God goes around killing people.¹³⁵

In a bracketed note, Winbery wrote that Larry Hubbard, as well as Jeff Pardue, were two of the department's failures, having both withdrawn because of an inability or unwillingness to function in an academic setting.¹³⁶ In a later letter to President Lynn, Winbery offered some response to allegations made by Bill Robertson that a philosophy professor had suggested that Christ's death was an afterthought in God's plan.¹³⁷ Again, Winbery said this was matter of exposing students to various views. As for Robertson's point about Abraham not being asked by God to sacrifice his son, Winbery said this was a common theory for those who espouse that Abraham was wrestling with his exposure to

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 3.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Carlton Winbery to Robert Lynn, memorandum, July 20, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Winbery, the chair of the religion department, writes in response to one of the letters contained in the Hyatt booklet in reference to a discussion on the various views of why Jesus was killed in a course taught by professor of philosophy Gerry Heard, titled Philosophy of Religion. Winbery's contention is that all the major views were presented, but none was imposed.

religions that required human sacrifice.¹³⁸

In addition to internal letters defending their use of classroom materials and ideas, the Louisiana College faculty also responded to the packet through the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors. In their first memo to the faculty, the AAUP chapter called the Covenant with Louisiana Baptists and the Hyatt packet “a declaration of war on Louisiana College.”¹³⁹ The letter indicates that the AAUP had learned that the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency group was publishing a newsletter and had scheduled fourteen rallies to be held prior to the upcoming Louisiana Baptist Convention.¹⁴⁰ The AAUP believed the goal for the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency group was to elect a conservative as president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, appoint like-minded trustees, and then choose the next president of Louisiana College.¹⁴¹ The group feared that Louisiana College would become a Bible institute, staffed only by Baptists who were willing to pledge loyalty to the philosophy espoused in the Covenant with Louisiana Baptists.¹⁴² In closing, the AAUP asked faculty to join or to contribute financially to the chapter’s work which included electing Eddie Simmons as president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Ibid., 1.

¹³⁹ Louisiana College AAUP Chapter Executive Committee to members of the Louisiana College faculty, memorandum, June 30, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. In response to the Hyatt booklet, the group urges faculty members to join the AAUP chapter and engage in Louisiana Baptist politics.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2.

The strategy of the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency group, feared by the AAUP chapter, mirrors the strategy employed more than a decade earlier with the Southern Baptist Convention. The goal then was the refinement of the affiliated seminaries, largely because of the use of the historical-critical method. The Louisiana College faculty recognized early on that the election of the Louisiana Baptist Convention president was the first step in remaking the college.

While many of those who offered criticism of the college were pastors, there were ministers who offered support to the college and the educational methods employed by the faculty. Scott Shaver, who was pastor of First Baptist Church, Natchitoches, delivered a sermon in the summer of 1995 in which he addressed the issues. Shaver said that Louisiana College professors and administrators were sullied because of their insistence upon an educational process with integrity and a commitment to academic excellence.¹⁴⁴ He indicated that the religion department in particular had come under attack for making theology subservient to exegesis.¹⁴⁵ For Shaver, the commitment to an academic approach to the Bible did not mean the professors were not sincere Christians who did not take the Bible seriously.¹⁴⁶

President Lynn's personal notes from July, 1995 indicate that he was formulating responses to the many assertions made in Hyatt's packet, as well as other issues that could be raised at the upcoming Louisiana Baptist Convention. Lynn wrote that the

¹⁴⁴ Scott Shaver, "Pirates, Planks, and Plunges" typescript of sermon delivered at First Baptist Church, Natchitoches, Louisiana, July 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

various complaints about the religion department were general and based on hearsay.¹⁴⁷ He also pointed out that in the survey given to the 1994 senior class, seventy-one percent indicated they grew spiritually during their matriculation.¹⁴⁸ Lynn wrote that the assertion that religion faculty should teach in accordance with the *Baptist Faith and Message* bordered on creedalism and questioned what evidence indicated the faculty in the religion department were, in fact, teaching in contradiction to the statement.¹⁴⁹ The issue of how faculty were hired also worried Lynn, as he wrote in defense of the hiring policy of leaving the ultimate decision up to the academic affairs committee and the vice-president for academic affairs.¹⁵⁰

Lynn's notes extensively address the content of plays held in Theater Louisiana College. His defense cited the need for theatre students to participate in plays that would prepare them for a career in productions, the necessity of professional academicians selecting plays. He concluded that the depiction of what some label evil in the plays does mean those involved or Louisiana College condone the actions, rather that drama should include all facets of life.¹⁵¹ Lynn's notes conclude with responses to criticisms of the enrollment and tuition. He argued that during a period of sharp decline in the number of high school graduates, Louisiana College experienced enrollment increases in six of

¹⁴⁷ Robert Lynn to file, personal memorandum, July, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 1.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 2.

seven years.¹⁵² Lynn reasoned that those who criticized the sticker price really had no idea how much students actually paid, as the model was high-aid, meaning that the average student was responsible for one-half the sticker price.¹⁵³

Many of President Lynn's notes were used in a July 13 address to senior adults attending the annual Louisiana Baptist Adults with Seniority Conference held on the campus. He appears to have wanted to strike right back with members of the constituency and plant a different perspective in the minds of Louisiana Baptists, one vastly different than the picture painted in the Hyatt letters. Lynn began his address by calling the allegations against the college false, based on half-truths and distortions.¹⁵⁴ The bulk of his address was positive highlights. He touted the college's ranking among liberal arts colleges in the South, eighth and twenty-third among 433 national liberal arts colleges.¹⁵⁵ Lynn bragged that the college had an award winning London program.

President Lynn highlighted the ways in which Louisiana College was indeed a Christian college, noting that the Bible was the chief textbook, the college employed Christian professors, prayer was common, chapel was still required, the college would not employ homosexual faculty or staff, students spent their breaks doing mission work,

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵⁴ Robert Lynn, "Shedding Light: How Louisiana College is Doing," typescript of an address given to the annual Adults with Seniority Conference, Pineville, Louisiana, July 13, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. President Lynn spoke about all the good things going on at Louisiana College and denies the allegations made in "You Need to Know about Louisiana College," arguing that the charges are part of an effort to elect a president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention in the coming fall.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 1.

and that the college prohibited alcohol, dancing, gambling, and R-rated movies.¹⁵⁶

Perhaps Lynn was playing to his audience with his conservative depiction of Louisiana College. Nevertheless his address to the Louisiana Baptist senior adults was meant to ease the fears stirred by the Hyatt letters and negative newspaper articles.

Lynn told the group that in spite of the factionalism plaguing Southern Baptists as a result of the Conservative Resurgence, an obvious reference to the efforts of Mercer University, Wake Forest University, and Baylor University to separate from their sponsoring state Baptist conventions, Louisiana College was striving to serve all Louisiana Baptists.¹⁵⁷ He also referenced the “ministers’ advisory group,” which was giving counsel as to how to improve the campus’s spiritual environment.¹⁵⁸ Lynn ended his address by saying that Louisiana College wanted to satisfy Louisiana Baptists.¹⁵⁹ Lynn’s address was not without reference to what he considered wise management of the institution during his twenty years as president. He mentioned that the physical plant, then valued at thirty-five million dollars, had been steadily upgraded.¹⁶⁰ And he noted that the college had operated in the black for forty-three consecutive years.

The same week Lynn met with Louisiana Baptists attending the conference, 1993 Louisiana College religion graduate Jason Russell, at the time a page designer for the *The Town Talk*, addressed the claims made in the Hyatt letters in an editorial in the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 1-4.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 4.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 4.

publication.¹⁶¹ He began his retort with a declaration that the letter campaign by Hyatt and others was little more than a Louisiana Baptist election year ploy, aimed at sullyng Louisiana College in order to secure votes for conservatives.¹⁶² Russell wrote that the accusations that religion professors suggested parts of the Bible were myth was inaccurate, that in reality the professors merely offered a variety of viewpoints on the Bible.¹⁶³ As for the accusations that Louisiana College students drank alcohol and frequented nightclubs, Russell reasoned that the actions of a few students should not characterize the majority of the student body.¹⁶⁴

The following week, the board of trustees met for the purpose of reviewing the various allegations made against the college. The body issued a nine point statement after the meeting.¹⁶⁵ The trustees' statement is difficult to interpret. On the one hand, the board indicated that they believed many of the complaints to have been previously reported and that they rejected the notion that the college had lost its moral and biblical roots.¹⁶⁶ At the same time, the statement included a number of points indicating that the board was sorry for previous misunderstandings, was ready to listen to concerns, and that

¹⁶¹ Jason Russell to *The Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, editorial titled "LC: some true, some not," July 14, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Louisiana College board of trustees, press release, July 21, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. The board of trustees met to examine the allegations contained in Hyatt's booklet. The trustees issue a nine point statement rejecting the notion that Louisiana College has lost its biblical and moral roots and affirming a commitment to Louisiana Baptists.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

ultimately the college was accountable to Louisiana Baptists.¹⁶⁷ To be fair, the statement also included affirmation of the faculty and staff.¹⁶⁸

What should have been disturbing in their far reaching impact on academic governance were two statements that involved academic governance. The first indicated an expectation on the part of the trustees that “faculty must continually keep in mind the sensitivity of students, the teachings of scripture, and the high moral standards expected by Louisiana Baptists.”¹⁶⁹ Absent from the statement is any reference to scholarship, academic freedom, or rigor. The second statement was in reference to the hiring of faculty, long a matter left to appointed committees and the vice president for academic affairs, was amended with “the trustees desiring that prior to the hiring of potential faculty or administration the trustees be given an invitation to meet the candidate.”¹⁷⁰ What did the trustees hope to add to the process? What credentials did they possess that qualified them to offer valuable input into the qualifications of faculty? Perhaps written off as a minor concession at the time, the insertion of the governing body into the academic processes at Louisiana College would prove to be a slippery slope toward micromanagement. And the faculty would see their influence over academic matters whittled to nothing over the next decade.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

On August 5, President Lynn released a public statement, “Response to the Allegations Against Louisiana College,” and while he offered similar points to those made in his address to the senior adult conference just weeks earlier, Lynn was more defensive of the college.¹⁷¹ His opening line accused the propagators of the allegations of threatening the college’s good reputation, which he said he had given twenty years of his life enhancing.¹⁷² Lynn classified the attacks upon the Louisiana College as a strategy by a political faction within the Louisiana Baptist Convention to elect two consecutive, conservative convention presidents and thus influence the selection of the next president of Louisiana College and executive director of the convention.¹⁷³ This comment is the first mention that Lynn’s tenure as president might be coming to an end. His assessment of the goals of the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency would prove to be prophetic.

Lynn’s response focused largely on the academic policies. Perhaps given the conciliatory response from the trustees laden with promises that the faculty would be more careful in choosing texts, Lynn was under pressure to defend the faculty. He described the annual evaluation process, noting that it involved students.¹⁷⁴ He indicated that he had read every evaluation for the accused professors, and that the only complaints made against any of them were in regard to academic rigor, and not liberalism.¹⁷⁵ Lynn noted that the complaints, approximately two dozen in number, were indeed few

¹⁷¹ Robert Lynn, press release titled “Response to the Allegations against Louisiana College,” August 5, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

considering that nineteen thousand courses had been taught at the college during his tenure as president.¹⁷⁶ Lynn concluded his response with a defense of academic freedom, arguing that religion professors should be allowed to share theories outside of orthodoxy with their students and the English professors should not be expected to avoid literature that depicts behavior many would consider sinful, because after all students were going out into a world that held values contrary to theirs and the college.¹⁷⁷

As the summer of 1995 drew to a close, Louisiana College was embroiled in the same kind of crisis that had befallen the seminaries. No longer was the Conservative Resurgence just a worry for college supporter Seller Aycok. Leon Hyatt's threats to President Lynn in March were not idle complaints similar to those that he had heard from others. While the trustees offered some words of encouragement to the faculty in their response, there was an indication that the Louisiana College faculty should consider its educational methods and be more careful in selecting classroom materials. While the summer of 1995 was a hot one in terms of weather and political pressure, it was just the beginning of a decade-long struggle over the control of Louisiana College.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 3.

CHAPTER V

INSTITUTIONAL CONVERSATIONS, CONFLICTS, AND CASUALTIES

As fall 1995 began, the local papers stopped covering the controversy. The internal struggle, however, only intensified. On September 8, Stan Lott, vice president for academic affairs, received a letter from James Rogers, executive director for the Southern Association of College and Schools-Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC).¹ Rogers' letter referenced the statement issued by the board of trustees on July 21, which he had asked Lott to provide.² After reviewing the statement by the trustees, Rogers felt obligated to express concerns that if some of the provisions in the board's statement were implemented then Louisiana College might have compliance issues with the association's criteria for accreditation.³ His letter referenced that boards "must not be subject to undue pressure from political, religious, or other external bodies."⁴ Rogers appears to have been reading the board of trustees' statement as a reaction to the Louisiana Inerrancy Fellowship's campaign.

¹ James Rogers to Stan Lott, September 8, 1995, Private papers of Stan Lott, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. James Rogers was the Executive Director of the Southern Association of College and Schools, Commission on Colleges. In this letter, Rogers thanks Stan Lott for a copy of the "Statement by the Louisiana College Board of Trustees," issued on 21 July 1995. Rogers also cautions Lott about a number of cases in which governing boards have been influenced by external political groups.

² Ibid., 1.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 2.

Rogers also cited accreditation principles that required member institutions to have a process for recruiting and appointing faculty who are best qualified.⁵ Perhaps this was a warning not to allow factions within the board and the larger Louisiana Baptist Convention to usurp a process that had largely been delegated to the faculty. Rogers referenced the criteria on academic freedom which permitted institutions to endorse particular religious philosophies, but required faculty and students to be free to pursue all data and question assumptions.⁶ He also highlighted criteria that required a statement of academic freedom.⁷ And Rogers included a reference to the principle noting that the faculty was to have primary responsibility for the academic programs.⁸ The final reference was in regard to political factions on boards, noting that board action must result from a decision of the entire board, not from a member or committee.⁹

Rogers attached a copy of a memo endorsed by the association in 1991, titled, “Institutional Autonomy and Its Importance in Higher Education.”¹⁰ The genesis for the statement was the growing control over institutions of higher education exerted by legislatures, coordinating boards, and church-related groups during the 1980s.¹¹ While the association gave deference to these groups in matters related to budgets and

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 3.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ James Rogers to Stan Lott, “Institutional Autonomy and Its Importance in Higher Education,” October 19, 1991, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹¹ Ibid.

expenditures, the statement is explicit in noting that, “a college or university is not a political institution; it is not a religion or a church.”¹² It went on to include this comment on academic freedom: “The Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools reaffirms its belief that the primary responsibility of a governing board of an institution is to protect the institution and its administration from external pressures antithetical to academic freedom, to institutional autonomy, or to integrity.”¹³ The memo closed with a warning that pressure from external groups on governing boards could place an institution’s accreditation in jeopardy.¹⁴

The letter from SACS-COC was a victory for the Louisiana College faculty. The strong language about the board’s July statement had to relieve some fears that the hiring and evaluation process could be delegated to the board of trustees. Rogers’ letter indicated that doing so, capitulating to the threats and demands made by the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency, could cost Louisiana College its regional accreditation, and thus deliver a certain death blow. Likewise, would not the majority of Louisiana Baptists prevent any kind of interference that would risk the state’s lone Baptist college?

The following week at the regularly scheduled board of trustees meeting, Joel Hanberry motioned to change the college charter to include the *1963 Baptist Faith and Message*.¹⁵ He was seconded by Darryl Hoychick who had arranged the phone meeting

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Louisiana College Board of Trustees, meeting minutes, September 11-12, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

for conservative trustees in February.¹⁶ A lengthy discussion ensued, with Hanberry arguing that Louisiana Baptists wanted to know what the college stood for and what kind of Christian education they could expect.¹⁷ Trustee Marjorie McCullough expressed concerns over putting it in the charter, while Mark Brister asked what harm it could do.¹⁸ John Curtis and Sellers Aycock expressed support for the *1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, but worried what including it within the charter might mean.¹⁹ The motion ultimately failed although fourteen voted for it and twelve against, because a ratification of the charter required a two-thirds majority.²⁰ Mark Sutton made a motion to discuss the issue at the December meeting, with President Lynn commenting that he would like to discuss areas for which the statement might have a greater impact.²¹

The issue over the inclusion of the *1963 Baptist Faith and Message* would not wait until December, as the next day the trustees voted to include it in the college's purpose statement as the college's official doctrinal statement.²² The same week a letter from a student to the editor of *The Wildcat*, the student paper, was submitted but not accepted for publication, but was preserved within the private papers of one of the faculty

¹⁶ Ibid., 1.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 2. Oddly enough the trustees also passed a resolution on their final meeting day against casino gambling coming into the Pineville area. Perhaps this seemingly unrelated gesture is indicative of the culture war mindset that was becoming more common on the board of trustees.

members.²³ In the letter, the student wrote that while he longed to join the administration in denying all of the allegations, experience as a student precluded him from a wholesale denial of the reports.²⁴ While finding pride in Louisiana College, the student wrote that some professors suggested that extramarital affairs might improve a marriage. He also indicated that some religion professors claimed that the Bible proved that Jesus could not be the messiah.²⁵ The writer went on to argue that President Lynn's defenses of Louisiana College were largely based on worldly organizations' assessment of the college's academic reputation.²⁶ The student concluded that the administration should allow the trustees to investigate the claims, attend classes unannounced, and see for themselves if the claims were true or false.²⁷

It is unclear why the letter was rejected as an editorial. Perhaps the editorial board was concerned that this might open the college up to more scrutiny from trustees and those involved with the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency. Or perhaps the omission of professors' names and courses in which statements denying Christ's divinity and promoting adultery made the letter too sensational for publication. Nevertheless the letter does provide some insight into the views of a segment of the student population that questioned the ideas and theological theories suggested or referenced by their professors.

²³ Student to *The Wildcat*, editorial not accepted for publication, September 13, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. The student was a junior at Louisiana College in the fall of 1995.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

On September 26, the faculty convened for their first meeting of the year.²⁸ The agenda was devoted to the issues from the summer and the board meeting earlier in the month. Connie Douglas addressed the packet of letters; Dennis Watson, a chemistry professor, reviewed the current academic freedom policy; and Carlton Winbery provided a synopsis of the *1963 Baptist Faith and Message*.²⁹ But the majority of the scheduled one hour meeting was devoted to discussion of a play selection policy.³⁰ Notes reflect that trustee Jim Spencer, a local pastor, met with Stan Lott to complain, and that the board had given direction at its previous meeting that the faculty could either produce some guidelines or the board would.³¹ It seems that the board or some faction had written a list of guidelines that both the executive committee and President Lynn rejected.³² Direction was given, however, that the policy must prohibit profanity.³³ In his address to the faculty, President Lynn told the faculty that it was essential for the administration and faculty to work together, not against one another, and not to sabotage political efforts in the Louisiana Baptist Convention fall election.³⁴

²⁸ Louisiana College Faculty, faculty meeting agenda, September 26, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

Winbery's report claimed that Leon Hyatt had taken over the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency after meeting with Paul Pressler, the Texas judge who was instrumental in the Conservative Resurgency in the larger Southern Baptist Convention in the 1970s.³⁵ Winbery traced the letter writing campaign to grassroots meetings held at Baptist churches, including Zoar Baptist and Trinity Baptist Church, located in Pineville.³⁶ The purpose of the meetings was to inspire those who had bad experiences with Louisiana College to write letters, to start a movement to bring the Louisiana Baptist Convention back to its biblical and moral roots.³⁷ According to Winbery, the letters which were later labeled by Hyatt as addressed to Louisiana Baptists were in fact addressed to Hyatt; he charged Hyatt with editing the letters to hide that they were solicited and to make their claims more severe.³⁸ Winbery noted that the letters, few in number when compared to the period of twenty years spanning the experience of their authors, were written largely by students who remained at Louisiana College far less than a year and made little effort to read and comprehend the material they were exposed to in their courses.³⁹ He argued that his method of teaching required exposing students to the mass of information related to theology, values, and church history.⁴⁰

³⁵ Carlton Winbery, "Report on the Criticism of Louisiana College," report to faculty, fall 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

In a letter to history professor and AAUP chapter vice-chair Bill Simpson, assistant professor of English Lawanda Smith compared her experience as a doctoral student at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to what appeared to be happening at Louisiana College.⁴¹ She indicated that her letter was in response to requests from members of the faculty to consider the situation at the college in light of her seven years at the seminary. Smith said her letter was a response highlighting parallels between the experiences of the two institutions.⁴² She reflected that when she first entered Southern there were concerns stemming from the Conservative Resurgence, but that the faculty reassured students that they were working with the conservative trustees to reach some agreement.⁴³ The initial changes were subtle, and included a few additions to the charter. But when conservatives gained a majority on the board, they became more forthright, and the situation intensified.⁴⁴ They initially said they wanted to communicate with students, that they were not looking to get rid of all the professors, just a few who were extreme.⁴⁵

Smith recounted the formulation of a covenant agreement faculty members were to follow in their teaching and for the administration to use in hiring new faculty.⁴⁶ In 1993, Albert Mohler was named president of the seminary, and Smith said his appointment was followed by the adoption of more stringent hiring policies, accreditation

⁴¹ Lawanda Smith to William Simpson, October 11, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA

⁴² Ibid., 1.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 2.

concerns, early retirement for a dozen professors, and the shuttering of the graduate program in social work.⁴⁷ According to Smith, in the spring of 1995, forty-eight faculty members presented Mohler with a petition critical of his administrative tactics and imploring him to work with them.⁴⁸ Mohler's response was to invite the forty-eight to find somewhere else to teach.⁴⁹

Smith offered a series of observations as she concluded her letter to Simpson. She believed that the situation at Louisiana College was not nearly as tenuous as it was at Southern because most of the trustees were supportive of the faculty, but that she feared that as more conservative trustees found their way onto the board this could change.⁵⁰ Smith said the comments by conservatives praising the college's solid academic reputation needed to be taken in light of the actions of those who said similar things about Southern.⁵¹ She suggested that the faculty work to resist the subtle changes in academic policies because compromise at Southern led to the erosion of all academic freedom.⁵² Smith said that while only the theatre department had lost a sense of academic freedom thus far in the controversy, because faculty members in all departments had spent hours debating whether or not to teach a text meant that their academic freedom had been

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 3.

⁵² Ibid.

infringed.⁵³ She closed her letter to Simpson by suggesting that faculty take action now before it was too late for Louisiana College.⁵⁴

The conversation and conflict went beyond the board, faculty, and students, as some of the alumni exchanged letters debating the academic policies. In October, Virgil Ayres wrote Linus Carroll, who served as president of Friends of Louisiana College.⁵⁵ In his letter, Ayres wrote that he had stopped making donations to Louisiana College altogether because of the experiences he heard about from members of his family who attended the college.⁵⁶ He wrote that on previous occasions he had shared his concerns with faculty members, trustees, and President Lynn about course content, but was ignored.⁵⁷ Ayres said he had seen others sullied.⁵⁸ He went on to question Lynn and other college personnel's actions leading up to the 1993 election for the Louisiana Baptist Convention presidency.⁵⁹ Ayres said 1995 was the year when the problems at the college, not the candidates were the focus of the annual Louisiana Baptist Convention, and he expected a different result.⁶⁰ He conceded that he was doing his best to get the word out, and that Leon Hyatt's efforts in sending the packet of letters was justified as a

⁵³ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Virgil Ayres to Linus Carroll, October 19, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

means to inform Louisiana Baptists and urge the college to change direction.⁶¹

As the annual Louisiana Baptist Convention drew near, President Lynn formulated public and private responses to the conflict he could see reaching a fever pitch in early November. In a chapel address on October 26, he provided context for the attacks that had overwhelmed the college during the previous summer.⁶² Recounting the days prior to the Southern Baptist Convention's 1979 annual meeting as collegial, Lynn confessed that he and others had believed that the college could remain above the national Baptist conflicts that had caused turmoil at the seminaries.⁶³ Praising pastors and alumni who had come to the defense of the college, Lynn said the target really was not people, neither students, faculty, nor administrators, rather the content of courses offered at Louisiana College.⁶⁴ In a defense of academic freedom, Lynn reasoned that even in a Christian college faculty members should retain the power to choose classroom materials.⁶⁵ And for the critics who called this license, he referenced the college's statement on professional ethics which provided boundaries and guidelines for selecting relevant material.⁶⁶ Much as Winbery had done in his report to the faculty in September, Lynn argued that it was mandatory that students of the Bible be exposed to varying

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Robert Lynn, "Understanding the Baptist Conflict," typescript of an address delivered at fall convocation at Louisiana College, Pineville, Louisiana, October 26, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁶³ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

theories of inspiration to prepare the graduates for their encounters with the modern world.⁶⁷ In conclusion Lynn asked that all members of the college community, even current students, speak up for Louisiana College, and keep those who sought controversy for their own gain, from splitting the campus.⁶⁸

Lynn's private notes indicate that he was prepared to answer questions on the floor of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.⁶⁹ Some of his answers were defenses of textbooks, including the Old Testament survey, which questioned the Genesis account's historicity.⁷⁰ Lynn's contention was that the religion faculty did not view the book as infallible, and he referenced Paul Tillich's statements giving credit to God for having complete control over creation.⁷¹ He was ready to defend the use of *The Tongues of Angels* as a book for the English course, noting that the book, while it included controversial passages about the sexuality of adolescents, had been effective in getting students to think about their own coming of age.⁷² He was poised to mention that the text was no longer in use, and that the English faculty members were always looking for better literature with which to challenge their students.⁷³

⁶⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Robert Lynn to file, confidential memorandum, fall 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA

⁷⁰ Ibid., 1.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 4.

⁷³ Ibid.

It is also evident that President Lynn was concerned that the trustees would be undermined in two ways. First, he feared that a motion would be made to appoint a special committee, perhaps much like the “Peace Committees” that investigated the seminaries, independent of the elected trustees.⁷⁴ Second, he feared that some trustees might be replaced for an alleged lack of responsiveness to the concerns of Louisiana Baptists.⁷⁵ Lynn’s prepared response to this potential strategy was a reference to the bylaws of the Louisiana Convention which gave sole power for nominating trustees to the convention’s committee on nominations.⁷⁶ He had also gathered positive biographical information on trustees believed to be in danger of impeachment.⁷⁷ Another worry for Lynn was a possible reduction in funding for Louisiana College.⁷⁸ His response was that these funds were recommended by various convention boards, and in light of the economic challenges and the rising cost of higher education such a move would only harm the college.⁷⁹

Lynn also prepared several answers to charges that there were homosexual faculty and students, noting that to his knowledge there were no homosexual faculty members currently employed, and that he was legally prohibited from discussing it if there had

⁷⁴ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

ever been.⁸⁰ He recited the college's stance on sexual purity which called for students to remain pure and be committed to the sanctity of traditional marriage.⁸¹ Lynn concluded his prepared retorts with references to the recent sixteen million dollar capital campaign, the new ministers' advisory board, and the college's rankings.⁸²

The conservative candidate for the convention presidency, Michael Claunch, pastor of First Baptist Church, Slidell, offered a different perspective in a conversation with Leon Hyatt in the weeks before the annual meeting.⁸³ In the Louisiana Conservative Resurgence's October newsletter, Claunch disclosed that Louisiana Baptists had some problems, chief among them that the convention had yet to add a clause that the Bible was the inerrant word of God in the constitution.⁸⁴ He lauded the college's trustees for adding the *1963 Baptist Faith and Message* as a doctrinal statement, but said the next step was for the religion faculty to affirm the doctrines and teach only in accordance with the beliefs outlined.⁸⁵ Claunch also praised the trustees for calling for a theatre production policy to guard against exposure to un-Christian values.⁸⁶ He declared that he believed the student letters in the Hyatt packet were true, and that a full investigation

⁸⁰ Ibid., 4.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., 6.

⁸³ "Claunch Offers Plan for Change!" in *Louisiana Baptists: A Conservative Resurgence*, clipping, October 28, 1995.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

should be conducted, to see if the allegations were factual.⁸⁷ When asked by Hyatt what his response was to those who suggested that he was against Louisiana College, he answered that he wanted the college to be all it could be for the glory of God.⁸⁸ Then he explained his view of the college's relationship to the convention as a parental one, and said when the daughter (Louisiana College) was accused of wrongdoing, the parent (Louisiana Baptist Convention) was obligated not to believe every rumor, not to write off critics as disloyal, but to investigate.⁸⁹

The same newsletter contained an article by Rick Henson, a pastor and contributor to Hyatt's packet of letters, on the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF), an alternative mission alliance that emerged in 1990 when moderate Baptists became disillusioned with the leadership in the Southern Baptist Convention.⁹⁰ The relevance of the article is that it accused the CBF of having a low view of the Bible, rejecting inerrancy, and opposing the expulsion of churches that affirmed homosexuality.⁹¹ The article implicated members of Louisiana College as active in CBF leadership: Stan Lott, Connie Douglas, Sarah Frances Anders, and Stan Poole.⁹² This article appears to have been written to further suspicions that the Louisiana College leadership was not loyal to the SBC and indeed radical in terms of the Bible and moral issues.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 3.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

A final article, also by Henson, dealt with a campus controversy that arose over a response article that followed the inclusion of a pro-life advertisement in an edition of *The Wildcat*.⁹³ Some students were offended by photographs of aborted fetuses and complained. The advisor for the student paper, Paula Furr, responded that the advertisement did not represent the college's position.⁹⁴ Stan Lott agreed with Furr, and was quoted in the article saying that it would be inappropriate for the college to instruct students one way or another on the issue.⁹⁵ The responses of Furr and Lott infuriated Henson who argued that a Christian college should take a definite pro-life position.⁹⁶ He went on to cast their responses as evidence of a different concept of Christian education, one that lacked the courage to take a stand on current moral issues.⁹⁷

The faculty was not uninvolved in the conversations leading up to the annual meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. Ted Barnes, a professor of art, wrote to his alumni, touting the college's strong academic ranking and thanking those who had given monies for the recent capital campaign.⁹⁸ He then told of the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency's criticisms of the college and warned that their vision would damage Louisiana College and likely undermine what the alumni wanted in an alma mater.⁹⁹

⁹³ Ibid., 4.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ted Barnes to Louisiana College department of art alumni, fall 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 1.

Barnes wrote that he had been asked by the college chapter of the AAUP to urge his alumni to join the Friends of Louisiana College to stay informed of happenings and promote and protect the college.¹⁰⁰ The letter indicated that the mailer was not paid for by college monies.¹⁰¹

As the fall unfolded the battle lines over Louisiana College were drawn. But unlike in 1993, in spite of the efforts of President Lynn, the Friends of Louisiana College, and moderate Baptists, Michael Claunch was elected president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention. And while his presidency would not become the trigger event in redefining the concept of academic freedom and governance at Louisiana College, it would shift the narrative and further lay the foundation for a different role for faculty to play when it came to academic governance and classroom materials.

At the December meeting of the board of trustees, James Guenther, an attorney specializing in the governance of Baptist institutions, spoke to the group.¹⁰² His address, meant to help educate new trustees and redirect some experienced ones, can be classified as balanced. Guenther began his address by describing the challenging and changing roles of institutions, especially Baptist colleges which were largely founded for the purpose of training ministers, a role relegated to the seminaries in the modern era.¹⁰³

Some of his language sounded as if he thought the purpose of Louisiana College was

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² James Guenther, "What's the Mission and Who's in Charge?," typescript of address at the orientation of new Louisiana College trustees, Pineville, Louisiana, December 4, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 6.

unclear, such that the political environment within the convention could seize upon this lack of clarity and attack.¹⁰⁴ Guenther said that from a legal standpoint it was the board of trustees that was responsible for defining the college's mission.¹⁰⁵ It was against this mission, he argued, that Louisiana College's quality could be measured and the ability to secure federal financial aid monies could be received.¹⁰⁶

Guenther was clear, however, that the power invested in the board was neither vested in a single trustee nor a minority of the board.¹⁰⁷ He was explicit that the convention was not in charge, although it was the Louisiana Baptist Convention who chose the trustees.¹⁰⁸ To the chagrin of those within the administration and faculty, Guenther argued that their role was to carry out the mission and policies outlined by the board.¹⁰⁹ To admit that the board of trustees had the legal authority over matters of the college was one thing; to concede they had the professional competence was another. Guenther closed his first address by reading a poem President Lynn had written for a 1982 chapel address, titled "Lord of the Campus."¹¹⁰ It called for all members of the college community to yield to Christ's leadership and not their own prejudices and arrogance about what was best for Louisiana College.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 7.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 8.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 12.

The following day Guenther offered more direction to the new trustees, and his message was targeted at those who were overly ambitious in their roles.¹¹¹ He urged them to remember their part; they were to provide leadership for general issues.¹¹² Guenther gave the example of trustees never needing to deal directly with employees, rather to work through the proper administrative channels.¹¹³ He emphasized the need for board members to learn the college's history, to understand the importance of traditions and key people.¹¹⁴ Guenther also gave the new trustees some suggestions for what not to do. He urged them to leave behind their preconceived notions.¹¹⁵ This was a direct reference to the rumors that had circulated about the college, and Guenther said that the trustees were now insiders with more accurate information and should spend more time listening than talking.¹¹⁶ Guenther's sternest warning was for the clergy on the governing body, who he urged to recognize that Louisiana College was not a church, and that the approach needed was not that used in a church setting.¹¹⁷

¹¹¹ James Guenther, "The Secret Is in the Samsonite!," typescript of address at meeting of the Louisiana College board of trustees, Pineville, LA, December 5 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

As 1995 ended, the conversations and conflicts subsided for a season. But the next set of conversations would be followed by more conflict and the first casualties in the battle over academic freedom at Louisiana College. President Lynn appears to have been convinced that the best approach in dealing with the newly appointed trustees was to try to win them over to his and the faculty's vision of academic freedom. Perhaps in previous seasons he had tried to ward off the conservative influence by working through Friends of Louisiana College and supporting the moderate candidates for president of the convention. The election of Claunch and the new slate of trustees called for a new era in board relations.

As a part of the spring 1996 board of trustees meeting, several faculty members gave presentations on what academic freedom meant in their profession.¹¹⁸ Thomas Howell, a graduate of Louisiana College in his thirtieth year in the professoriate, traced the history of academic freedom to the ancient Greeks.¹¹⁹ He credited the Middle Age deference to academics who were viewed by the public as only subservient to God for providing the concept of academic freedom.¹²⁰ Howell critiqued Scholasticism which he said stifled learning and alienated many thinking persons from the Catholic Church.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ "Faculty-Trustee Dialogue," agenda, March 18, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹¹⁹ Thomas Howell, "Presentation on Academic Freedom to LC Board of Trustees," typescript of remarks, Pineville, Louisiana, March 18, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹²¹ Ibid., 2.

Referencing the early American institutions, Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale, Howell suggested that academic freedom was not a reality in early colonial America.¹²² He credited Thomas Jefferson for advancing the concept of American academic freedom at the University of Virginia, and said that America took up the cause of academic freedom as a means to reach world-class status in terms of education.¹²³ Howell conceded that academic freedom in the context of a Christian college provided special concerns.¹²⁴ For some, academic freedom was impossible because of the religious atmosphere that precluded an objective search for truth.¹²⁵ For others the inclusion of academic freedom meant that teachers and students would have license to compromise the faith and morals.¹²⁶

He answered the critics by arguing that all teachers, secular or Christian, have beliefs, and that holding beliefs does not exclude one from objectivity in evaluating a subject.¹²⁷ For Howell, beliefs served as a foundation to build the college, not a wall to limit it.¹²⁸ He suggested that academic freedom had been endorsed by many religious denominations, was a means by which to educate students, not indoctrinate them, and a

¹²² Ibid., 3.

¹²³ Ibid., 5.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 6.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 7.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

necessity to present the truth.¹²⁹ Howell said that if he could not offer facts because they were offensive to some it would limit his ability to be accurate.¹³⁰

Howell concluded his remarks with a plea for the board to permit him and his colleagues the freedom they needed to fulfill their vocational calling.¹³¹ He said, “If we cannot go into our classrooms believing that we have the freedom to search for God’s truth without someone constantly looking over our shoulders, putting limitations on our approach, second-guessing what we do, we cannot do here what we were called to do: educate students from a Christian perspective, not indoctrinate them.”¹³² Howell made it clear that he and his fellow professors were not comfortable in the present climate at the college. “At present, many of my colleagues and I feel that we are under attack. If that perception is correct, we must ask where we have failed. Quite frankly, I do not see failure when I find our graduates leading productive lives, assuming important roles in Baptist churches around the world, and sending their children back to study here at Louisiana College.”¹³³ And he pointed out the weakness of a belief system that avoided new ideas, “If you believe that some historical discovery or philosophical theory or work of literature or musical presentation or something seen through a telescope or microscope will somehow destroy Christianity, then your Christianity is based on fear.”¹³⁴

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 8.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Linda Peevy, a professor of English, also offered her concept of the application of academic freedom in teaching at a Christian college.¹³⁵ Like Howell, Peevy classified her teaching as a vocational calling, one rooted in the Christian sense of relationship, accountable to God and other human beings.¹³⁶ Referencing the college's statement of purpose, which called for Louisiana College to be a community of learning and free inquiry, Peevy said that as a teacher her role was to contribute by presenting a variety of ideas.¹³⁷ The responsibility of the department of English and languages had a broad audience because all students were required to take nine hours of English and one course in a foreign language.¹³⁸ But for Peevy, their purpose was more than helping students develop adequate reading and writing skills.¹³⁹ "Those of us who teach English use literature to help students make personal encounters with the central issues of life. I believe that students must have the freedom to encounter ideas and opinions—even conflicting ones—and that as a teacher I have a responsibility to help them encounter these ideas and opinions, to discuss, analyze, and evaluate them."¹⁴⁰ Citing religious educator Parker Palmer, Peevy said she rejected a model of education that was obsessed with outcomes and promoted one that provided students various sources from which to

¹³⁵ Linda Peevy, "Address to the Board of Trustees: The Application of Academic Freedom and Responsibility to the Teaching of English," typescript of address, Pineville Louisiana, March 18, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

draw their own sense of truth.¹⁴¹ For Peevy, academic freedom was as important to the students at Louisiana College as it was to the professors: “Academic freedom for students ensures them the opportunity to engage openly and fearlessly in the business of thinking about themselves in relationship with themselves, with others, and with God.”¹⁴² She concluded, much as Howell had, with the importance of academic freedom to her role. “Using literature as a catalyst, I encourage the pursuit of truth from a Christian perspective, a perspective that does not deny the complexity of the human condition but rather seeks to understand it.”¹⁴³

The trustee meeting provided some members of the faculty with the opportunity to share their passion for teaching and why academic freedom was an essential guardian of that calling. Unfortunately, however, the conflicting ideas Peevy described in her presentation reflected very much the view of some on the board of trustees. Their view of education was the prescription of correct answers, not the exposure to a variety of ideas. Was it a lack of trust of the faculty? Or a lack of trust in the students to draw the best conclusions? This remains a mystery in this narrative. Nevertheless the final weeks of the spring semester proved to be anything but ordinary, and the summer would include more headlines in the local papers.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid., 2.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 2.

Also in the spring of 1996, Leon Hyatt, leader of the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency, renamed Louisiana Baptists: Speaking the Truth in Love, released a document titled “Corrections, Clarifications, and Confirmations.”¹⁴⁴ His goal was to answer critics who suggested that the packet of letters released a year earlier contained many lies and half-truths.¹⁴⁵ In the preface he wrote that the concerns motivating the group were related to the college’s loss of biblical and moral roots.¹⁴⁶ The moral roots had been severed by the lewd materials and plays used for years in the English and theatre departments, and Hyatt took credit for getting a play policy instituted, a feat he said could be attributed to the circulation of letters.¹⁴⁷ The loss of biblical roots were the direct result of religion faculty insisting that the Bible contained errors and inconsistencies, and Hyatt wrote that he and others had given the faculty members ample opportunities to profess their allegiance to the scriptures.¹⁴⁸ The document contains letters from the writers of the original letters, typically offering confirmation that they indeed wrote what was contained in the packet. There are a few minor clarifications. The letter also contains a transcript of a discussion between Hyatt and Carlton Winbery, in which Winbery answers Hyatt’s questions about various biblical texts.

¹⁴⁴ Leon Hyatt to Louisiana Baptists, booklet titled “Corrections, Clarifications, and Confirmations,” spring 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

The writers who did offer clarifications indicated that they did not address the letters to Louisiana Baptists, rather to Leon Hyatt.¹⁴⁹ One author admitted that his letter should not have said the liberal views were all Carlton Winbery's, rather that Winbery presented the views.¹⁵⁰ In affirming his letter, Virgil Ayers wrote that "The basic thrust of Louisiana College is secular and that 'academic excellence' takes precedence over holiness."¹⁵¹ For the most part, the contributors maintained that there were serious moral and biblical issues at Louisiana College.

The transcription of Winbery and Hyatt's discussion reveals that the two differed mostly on minor issues. Winbery defended the use of literature texts that include profanity, arguing that bad characters have to be depicted by cursing and doing other socially unacceptable things.¹⁵² He also got into a heated exchange with Wayne Kite and Rick Henson, two of the contributors to the original packet of letters. Winbery took up for the theatre, saying that he had taken his daughter to most of the plays and never found them offensive.¹⁵³ Henson argued that the profanity was unnecessary.¹⁵⁴ Winbery countered that the profanity was not glorified.¹⁵⁵

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 3.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁵² Ibid., 9.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

Hyatt and Winbery argued over the meaning of several Greek words, with Winbery largely agreeing that he believed that most of the biblical miracles actually occurred. He did take exception with the story of Jonah which he said was a religious symbolic myth.¹⁵⁶ Winbery affirmed the *1963 Baptist Faith and Message*, but said he limited the Bible's accuracy to "its matters," meaning only in reference to spiritual matters.¹⁵⁷ This infuriated Hyatt who argued that the scriptures were also correct in matters of history and science.¹⁵⁸ Winbery retorted that the statement was never meant to control people and limit research.¹⁵⁹ When pressed on the issue of creation, Winbery said he believed "In the beginning, God" covered a wide range of theories.¹⁶⁰ At the end of the interview Hyatt concluded that Winbery's answers comprised a good testimony, and that his figures indicated that Winbery believed that ninety-six percent of the Bible was correct, but pointed out that Winbery had an open mind about whether the texts were accurate.¹⁶¹

The month of May was an active one on the campus, as President Lynn announced his retirement, effective after the next academic year, and Stan Lott announced he was taking a presidency in North Carolina.¹⁶² At the monthly faculty

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 11.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 13.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., 14.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 15.

¹⁶² Stan Lott, typescript of comments offered at faculty meeting, Pineville, Louisiana, May 10, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

meeting, Lott gave a farewell address in which he implored his colleagues to face the future with caution and optimism.¹⁶³ He used the term caution because he believed the conservatives would seize upon the opportunity to control the college during the transition, perhaps even trying to influence who succeeded Lynn.¹⁶⁴ He urged the faculty to hold high the banner of academic freedom, to make the strongest case for its importance.¹⁶⁵ Lott urged optimism because institutions were typically resilient, largely capable of sustaining and surviving changes in leadership.¹⁶⁶ But Lott did offer one exception that could totally redefine the meaning of academic freedom at Louisiana College, in saying, “Unless there is a wholesale change in the makeup of the board and, following that, a wholesale change in the leadership of the college, the upcoming period of transition may not differ greatly from past periods of transition.”¹⁶⁷ Little did Lott know that his scenario of the reshaping of academic freedom would come to fruition, although later, after the selection of Lynn’s successor’s successor.

The following week, the board of trustees rejected Lawanda Smith as a candidate to fill a position as an assistant professor of religion.¹⁶⁸ Smith had received the unanimous support of the search committee, Stan Lott, and President Lynn, and she had

¹⁶³ Ibid., 1.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Lawanda Smith to Louisiana College AAUP chapter, “An Account of the Faculty/Trustee Reception,” memorandum, May 16, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

been serving a one year appointment as a visiting assistant professor of English.¹⁶⁹ More disturbing than the rejection of Smith was the manner in which she was questioned by several trustees at a reception before the trustees met to deny her recommendation. Smith wrote that several of the trustees encircled her and fired a variety of questions at her, many of which were hot button issues in the Southern Baptist Convention.¹⁷⁰ She was asked whether there was more than one way to God, what she believed about the inspiration of scripture, whether she believed in the biblical miracles, and her stance on the authorship of various New Testament letters.¹⁷¹ These questions were not surprising, given some of the issues Hyatt had raised in his packet of letters.

The inquisition went so far as to cover issues of whether wives should submit to their husbands, Smith's view of abortion, and even the content of her dissertation.¹⁷² Trustee Mark Brister insinuated that the inclusion of a Latin American theologian's teaching model might mean that Smith had Marxist tendencies; she denied the charges.¹⁷³ Brister then told Smith that he heard that a female doctoral student had refused to shake the hand of Al Mohler, the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, at the graduation in which Smith received her degree.¹⁷⁴ Smith denied that she was the graduate.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 2.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁷² Ibid., 4-5.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 6.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

Professor of history Bill Simpson called a special faculty meeting for the following week “to consider a response and plan of action” to the board’s move regarding Smith.¹⁷⁵ Simpson’s letter to the faculty reveals more details regarding the action taken against Smith including the fact that the rejection of Smith was by a margin of one vote and only twenty-five of the thirty-four trustees were present for the vote.¹⁷⁶ Simpson warned that if that Louisiana College was to uphold to its academic tradition, it was incumbent upon the faculty to impress upon the trustees the dangers of their overreach into administrative matters.¹⁷⁷ He also indicated his fear that if future quality candidates for faculty positions were invited to the campus and treated in the manner Smith was, then the college would have trouble recruiting any quality academicians.¹⁷⁸

The faculty met on May 22, and passed a resolution by a margin of forty-two for, zero against, and one abstention decrying the treatment of Smith and the other faculty candidates as confrontational and unprofessional.¹⁷⁹ The measure, as had Simpson’s letter to the faculty, warned that if this became the norm for prospective faculty members, the recruitment of superior faculty would be hindered, and that the previous model of using the academic affairs committee had served the college well for decades.¹⁸⁰ The

¹⁷⁵ William Simpson to Louisiana College faculty, memorandum, May 20, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Louisiana College faculty, resolution, May 22, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

resolution called for a resumption of the academic affairs committee in screening potential faculty members.¹⁸¹

The 1995-1996 academic year at Louisiana College was a storied one with a series of institutional conversations about what constituted academic freedom in a Christian college and where Louisiana College may be heading if the vision of Louisiana Baptist Convention president Michael Claunch and Leon Hyatt were realized. It also included a number of conflicts, as those on the board and those within the administration and faculty warred over processes and policies. But the year's casualties far outweigh the interest spurred by the institutional arguments. Alumnae Lawanda Smith no longer had a job, and the one she was qualified for and selected for was quashed by those on the board of trustees who overstepped what had long been an academic matter. Stan Lott, an alumnus and long-time employee with two earned doctorates, left for greener pastures. And most important, President Lynn would serve his final year during the 1996-1997 academic session. The departure of Lott and the impending retirement of Lynn likely spelled trouble for the remaining academic processes, for if their replacements failed to defend the faculty's role in determining course materials and hiring faculty members then the future of Louisiana College as a reputable institution was in doubt.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

RAMIFICATIONS AND RESPITE

The summer of 1996 and the 1996-1997 academic year included a number of ramifications from the Lawanda Smith decision and ultimately a respite for what had been a long and tiring battle between the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency and some members of the board of trustees and the faculty and administration. Before a lawsuit and the selection of a new president halted the controversy for a period of five years, alumni in Leon Hyatt's camp and those involved with the Friends of Louisiana College would trade letters over the direction of their beloved alma mater. And the faculty would again make their internal and external case for academic freedom.

Professor Bill Simpson addressed a letter to the college's friends and benefactors, begging them to call and write members of the board of trustees (their names and telephone numbers attached to his letter), condemning the action taken against Lawanda Smith.¹ His letter was endorsed by forty-nine members of the faculty at a meeting on May 25.² Simpson reasoned the overriding of the faculty and administration's endorsement of Smith was "unprecedented in the history of Louisiana College."³ He called attention to her credentials: a summa cum laude graduate of the college and a holder of two master's degrees and a doctorate from a Southern Baptist seminary.⁴ Much

¹ Louisiana College faculty to Louisiana College friends and benefactors, May 26, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

² Ibid., 2.

³ Ibid., 1.

⁴ Ibid.

as the faculty resolution had, Simpson's letter to the college's constituents warned that if the conservative faction of the board of trustees were not reined in, then Louisiana College would forfeit its reputation as a quality educational institution.⁵

Simpson sent a second letter, this one to the board of trustees on June 1, referencing his letter to supporters and local media reports that the Louisiana College faculty was in rebellion in response to the decision not to hire Smith.⁶ He said the term "rebellion" was too strong, that "protest" was a more appropriate term.⁷ Simpson called upon trustees who supported deference to the administration on the hiring of faculty to increase their efforts to preserve the liberal arts tradition the college had provided for Baptists and non-Baptists alike.⁸ Simpson did concede that he knew some on the board opposed the administration's power and hinted that they may be in the camp of those who had enacted changes to academic policies at several of the Southern Baptist seminaries.⁹

On June 10, professors Carlton Winbery, Fred Downing, James Heath, and Connie Douglas, all of whom were criticized in the Hyatt packet, filed a lawsuit for defamation against the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency, alleging that the packet's letters were aimed at hurting their moral reputations and professional careers.¹⁰ Their

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Bill Simpson to Louisiana College board of trustees, June 1, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA. Simpson writes that rumors of a "faculty rebellion" at Louisiana College as reported in *The Alexandria Daily Town Talk* are not true.

⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ "Louisiana College professors sue state conservatives group," in *Baptist Press*, clipping, July 1, 1996.

claim, filed in the Ninth Judicial District in Alexandria, La., argued that the distribution of the letters was a strategy to exert pressure on the administration and trustees aimed at changing the direction of the college, specifically in regard to how it selected faculty.¹¹ They also contended that the ultimate goal of Leon Hyatt and the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency was to circumvent the trustee model of governance which offered faculty and the administration some protection from direct contact with Louisiana Baptists.¹²

Michael Claunch, president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, did not deny the claim that Hyatt and others' efforts were aimed at interrogating the faculty on their personal beliefs.¹³ He remarked that he had previously suggested holding an open meeting where evidence against the faculty members could be presented to the trustees who would serve as justices determining the accuracy of the allegations. He said his idea was met with no response, except for a suggestion from Stan Lott that such a notion was ridiculous.¹⁴ Vic Sooter, attorney for the professors, said that the charges against the faculty ranged from the exposure of students to pornography to the disparagement of the sanctity of human life.¹⁵ He suggested that the issue was largely political, and that the professors and the conservatives who were behind the packet of letters disagreed on "finer points of theology."¹⁶

¹¹ Ibid., 3.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

The Alexandria Daily Town Talk carried the story, offering both sides the opportunity to weigh in on the pending suit.¹⁷ Professor James Heath said the future of Louisiana College was at stake, and that moderate Southern Baptists needed to get involved, because the conservatives would rather destroy the institution than to see it remain a liberal arts college.¹⁸ Professor Fred Downing suggested that the conservatives whom he referred to as fundamentalists were out to quash academic freedom in the name of biblical inerrancy and a desire to turn back the clock on biblical scholarship.¹⁹ Trustee Stan Miller replied to the claims of Heath, Downing, and Sooter, saying that the trustees were not out for control, but rather aimed “to return the college to its founding roots.”²⁰ The lawsuit and articles that followed in the local and larger Baptist press meant that the issues at Louisiana College were once again garnering media attention.

Letters from alumni in the summer of 1996 reveal that there was no consensus among them that either the faculty was out of line in wanting to retain academic freedom or that the board was out of line for aiming to curb it. In writing to trustee Sellers Aycock, Phillip Hyatt responded to Bill Simpson’s plea to Louisiana College supporters.²¹ Hyatt lauded the board for its questioning of Lawanda Smith, calling it the body’s elected duty to Louisiana Baptists, to ensure that the heritage of the college would

¹⁷ “Lawsuit imminent in LC controversy,” in *The Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, clipping, summer 1996.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Phillip E. Hyatt to Sellers Aycock, June 19, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

be preserved.²² He congratulated the trustees who voted not to appoint Smith to the religion faculty, calling it a “strong stand for the truth of the Bible.”²³ It is unclear how the rejection of Smith had anything to do with the Bible, as she indicated in her description of the meeting with the trustees that she affirmed a high view of scripture.²⁴

Phillip Hyatt contended that the rejection of Smith was not evidence of a doctrinal mandate imposed upon faculty members to believe a certain way as Professor Simpson indicated in his letter, but, rather that the trustees were merely ensuring that new faculty hires held beliefs consistent with Louisiana Baptists.²⁵ Hyatt suggested this would enhance the quality of education offered at Louisiana College and grow the enrollment.²⁶ According to Hyatt, many Louisiana Baptists, pastors and laypersons alike, had been incapable in recent years of recommending the college as a place to receive a “Bible-based education.”²⁷ In closing, Hyatt said that the endorsement of Simpson’s letter by the majority of the faculty was evidence of a real issue of loyalty to Louisiana Baptists who made the college operable through their financial gifts.²⁸

²² Ibid., 1.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Lawanda Smith to Louisiana College AAUP chapter, “An Account of the Faculty/Trustee Reception,” memorandum, May 16, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

²⁵ Phillip E. Hyatt to Sellers Aycock, 1.

²⁶ Ibid., 2.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

Alumnae Ida Sampson wrote trustee Gene Steen asking that he and the other trustees reconsider their rejection of Lawanda Smith.²⁹ Sampson attended church with Smith; the two sang in the choir together.³⁰ Apparently Smith had told Sampson that Steen was one of those who questioned her harshly, because Sampson chided Steen for his personal treatment of Smith.³¹ She compared it to the religious leaders' treatment of Jesus.³² In writing to Steen, she asked that he end his vendetta against Smith by making a motion at the next called board meeting to approve the appointment of Smith to the religion faculty.³³

The fall of 1996 marked the ninetieth anniversary of the founding of Louisiana College. Not surprising, as a part of the celebration on Founder's Day, observed annually on the first Thursday in October, the chapel program included Thomas Howell, Linda Peevy, and Carlton Winbery, who each gave talks on academic freedom within the context of a Baptist college.³⁴ Winbery's address referenced the history of Baptists as persecuted free-thinkers in England who have been historically anti-creedal for fear of the kind of persecution they first endured.³⁵ He called the conservative movement within the

²⁹ Ida Sampson to Gene Steen, August 18, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 2.

³⁴ "Academic Freedom," in *Columns: The Newsmagazine of Louisiana College Alumni*, fall 1996. Manuscripts from addresses on academic freedom, given at chapel during the fall of 1996 as a part of college's 90th anniversary, are published.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

Southern Baptist Convention an attack on life in the spirit bent on enforcing legalistic rules.³⁶ His analysis of those seeking the adoption of biblical inerrancy was that they were really interested in the prescription of the inerrancy of their biblical interpretation.³⁷ Winbery concluded that those who sought to amend the academic processes at Louisiana College were also aiming to elect like-minded presidents of the Louisiana Baptist Convention who would nominate trustees to ultimately manage and control what was taught in courses offered at the college.³⁸ In closing, he warned that a creed was coming that would enforce conformity to inerrancy and other doctrines, and asked the college community to oppose the efforts of the Louisiana Conservative Resurgence.³⁹

In November, at the annual Louisiana Baptist Convention, President Lynn addressed the messengers for the final time. He told those assembled that the first ninety years of Louisiana College belonged to the history books, and that the college's future was squarely on the shoulders of Louisiana Baptists.⁴⁰ Lynn stressed that unlike many denominational colleges, Louisiana College had not strayed from Louisiana Baptists.⁴¹ But he did urge Louisiana Baptists to let the college be a college, an institution that

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Robert Lynn, "Let Louisiana College be a College," typescript of address at Louisiana Baptist Convention, November, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1.

“existed to educate, not indoctrinate.”⁴² Lynn said that education cannot occur in an atmosphere without academic freedom, that higher education is about presenting various and conflicting views.⁴³

Perhaps in reference to the challenges he had faced in recent years with rogue trustees, Lynn implored the messengers to provide “willing and effective trustees.”⁴⁴ He argued that trustees who were appointed for political reasons, without any appreciation for the educational process, had proven disastrous for other Baptist entities.⁴⁵ He challenged the faithful to prohibit the college and other entities from becoming footballs to be tossed about by the various factions.⁴⁶ Lynn also urged Louisiana Baptists to send their sons and daughters to the state’s only Baptist college, and to support the college financially, noting that recent tuition hikes were due in large part to a decline in giving to the state Baptist convention.⁴⁷

In closing Lynn reminded the laity that they could be proud of Louisiana College.⁴⁸ He introduced two faculty members, Joe Black and George Hearn, who had been named professors of the year for the state in their respective fields.⁴⁹ Lynn

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

mentioned that the college had garnered more national recognition, being named both a top college buy and to the list of character building colleges.⁵⁰ Finally, he reported a million dollar gift from Ray and Mary Anna Granberry, two alums who wanted to support the construction of the new student and conference center.⁵¹ After Lynn spoke, David Nowell, a vice president for finance, thanked Lynn and his wife, Bonnie, for their twenty-one years of service to the college, reminding the crowd that financial solvency and enrollment growth had accompanied Lynn's tenure as president.⁵²

In November, the incoming chairman of the board of trustees, Reverend Jim Spencer, pastor of Kingsville Baptist Church, located in Pineville, spoke to the faculty at a special meeting. Spencer indicated that he was interested in building bridges and working toward reconciliation.⁵³ Correspondence between Spencer and Stan Poole, who was serving as interim vice president for academic affairs, suggests that the two forged a positive working relationship, one that would enable the respite.⁵⁴ In writing to Spencer, Poole expressed several concerns, chief among them that the division on the board of trustees could cause issues with regional accreditation.⁵⁵ Referencing the investigation by the accrediting body for the seminaries, Poole reminded Spencer that the investigations resulted in probation for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Stan Poole to Jim Spencer, November 15, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.⁵⁶ Noting that Louisiana College was accredited by the same body, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS-COC), he included three requirements for accreditation.⁵⁷

The first referenced the accrediting agency's stance on boards not being subject to pressure from religious bodies, and that a board should protect administrations from external pressure.⁵⁸ Poole mentioned that some on the board had been publicly involved with the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency, making the college vulnerable on compliance.⁵⁹ Next, Poole cited the association's insistence that there be a clear distinction, both in policy and practice, delineating policy-making functions of the board and the administering functions of the administration.⁶⁰ Poole indicated that the insertion of the trustees in the faculty selection process the previous spring would likely be found to violate the accrediting body's standard.⁶¹ Third, Poole cited the board's insistence on theatre production guidelines, suggesting that the extension of the policy to other academic areas could violate the SACS-COC's requirement on academic freedom for faculty and students.⁶² While he conceded that he did not believe a loss of accreditation

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

was imminent, Poole worried that faculty might contact SACS-COC's and ask for an investigation.⁶³ He wanted Spencer to understand that while an investigation might only result in probation, the loss of accreditation would be devastating and result in the loss of federal financial aid for students, and students would not be able to pursue graduate study.⁶⁴ Poole also warned that even probation would hurt student and faculty morale, diminish recruiting efforts, and damage the college's long-standing reputation.⁶⁵

Poole's second major concern was faculty morale. He said the board's retreat from their initial statement rejecting the charge that the college had not drifted from its moral and biblical roots was fueling faculty concerns.⁶⁶ Poole noted that the college had lost fourteen faculty members in eighteen months, more than a fifth of the college's small faculty.⁶⁷ He mentioned that many on the faculty were considering applying to other colleges, for fear that the future would be marred by battles with the board of trustees over academic freedom.⁶⁸

Poole's final concern was related to the composition of the academic affairs committee.⁶⁹ He voiced concerns from the faculty that the committee would be stacked with members who were sympathetic to the Conservative Resurgence, and thus use their

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

position to push the group's agenda.⁷⁰ Poole said many were worried that this group, if hostile, could complicate the search process for faculty members by picking only those candidates endorsed by the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency.⁷¹ In closing, Poole apologized if his correspondence was offensive, and urged Spencer to continue to be an instrument in bringing the trustees and faculty together.⁷²

While relations between the board and the faculty seemed to be improving, given Spencer's commitment to building bridges, the lawsuit against Hyatt and the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency proceeded. Some in the convention rejected the suit as unbiblical. Members of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, located in Jonesboro, wrote a letter to professors Winbery, Downing, Heath, and Douglas, urging them to drop the suit because the scriptures forbid such action among brothers and sisters.⁷³ The letter indicated that the congregation was "incensed and offended."⁷⁴ The church accused the professors of providing a poor example of character to their students.⁷⁵

Leon Hyatt and his attorneys did not rely on the churches to convince the professors to dismiss their claims. They took the matter to the Louisiana State Supreme Court in March, 1997, asking that the case be dismissed on grounds that it fell under the

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ebenezer Baptist Church to Carlton Winbery, Frederick Downing, James Heath, and Connie Douglass, November 17, 1996, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

First Amendment because the college was church-related and thus exempt from judicial review.⁷⁶ The court, in a vote of 8-0, rejected the motion, and permitted the case to proceed.⁷⁷ Hyatt's legal team then issued a statement that they believed the claim of defamation was weak, too vague, and that another motion was coming.⁷⁸

On the same day that the Louisiana Supreme Court denied the motion to dismiss the suit against the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency, the board of trustees unanimously selected William "Rory" Lee as president.⁷⁹ Chairman of the board of trustees, Jim Spencer, said the search for a new president unified the board, and that Lee was a president all Louisiana Baptists could support.⁸⁰ Lee commented that he challenged the trustees during his interview that the future of the college was up to them.⁸¹ Lee brought to Louisiana College more than two decades of experience in Baptist higher education, including a vice presidency and interim presidency at Mississippi College and a presidency at William Carey College.⁸² Perhaps a plus for Lee and reassuring for pastors on the board of trustees, Lee had served as a part-time pastor

⁷⁶ "Louisiana Supreme Court permits profs-v.-conservatives lawsuit," in *Baptist Press*, April 10, 1997.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁷⁹ "Rory Lee unanimous selection as Louisiana College president," in *Baptist Press*, April 2, 1997.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

for sixteen years, and he considered himself a conservative.⁸³ Lee described his position on academic freedom with nuance, calling it “absolutely critical to academic excellence but bordered by the mission statement.”⁸⁴ He defined the purpose of a Christian college as an institution that insists on academic excellence and emphasizes spiritual growth.”⁸⁵

Apparently the ruling by the Louisiana Supreme Court and the selection of Lee convinced the Louisiana Baptist leadership that it was time to move on from the controversy stemming from Leon Hyatt’s packet of letters. They began to discuss ways to settle the matter out of court, to avoid an ugly trial and focus on the future of the college.⁸⁶ A fund was set aside by the Louisiana Baptist Convention to pay the attorney fees for the professors and Hyatt, and Hyatt ultimately agreed to write letters of apology to the professors.⁸⁷ His letters were addressed to the professors in October 1997, and he wrote that he regretted the harm the letters caused.⁸⁸ Hyatt indicated that he believed the professors to be “dedicated scholars, sincere persons, and skillful teachers.”⁸⁹ He shared that his mission was pure, to readjust the theological stance of the college, but that he recognized that their differences in theology did not preclude them from having “devoted

⁸³ Ibid., 2.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ “Settlement reached in La. lawsuit profs filed against conservatives,” in *Baptist Press*, March 11, 1998.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁸⁸ Leon Hyatt to Carlton Winbery, Frederick Downing, James Heath, and Connie Douglass, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1.

their lives to Christian teaching at Louisiana College.”⁹⁰ Finally he conceded that he never intended to accuse them of “departing from their individual moral or biblical roots.”⁹¹

The settlement which was signed by all parties in September “provided that no adverse action would be taken against the professors by Louisiana College for having filed the lawsuit, including but not limited to: termination; suspension; reprimand; adverse comment in the personnel file, rebuke, or censure; adverse or negative job recommendation; loss of or challenge to rights of tenure; reduction in salary; loss of job current status; public criticism; or denial of salary increases or promotion.”⁹² The agreement did not guarantee a lifetime contract, but did affirm the four for their past dedication to the college and students.⁹³

For their part, the professors pledged to teach in such a manner as to uphold the inspiration and authority of the scriptures, and to be tolerant of students whose views differed from their own.⁹⁴ They agreed to teach consistent with the statement about teacher responsibility and academic freedom found within the faculty handbook.⁹⁵ After several delays, the settlement was ratified by the board of trustees on February 28,

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid., 2.

⁹² Settlement for Winbery et. al versus Hyatt, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁹³ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 3.

1998.⁹⁶ As Rory Lee's first year as president unfolded, the long-awaited respite began for the faculty at Louisiana College. Leon Hyatt had essentially been reprimanded for his letter writing and political organizing against the faculty. And Rory Lee appeared to have strong support among Louisiana Baptists, enough to ensure most of them that all was well on Holy Hill in Pineville. All parties appeared to be content.

There can be little doubt that the leadership provided by Rory Lee and board chairman Jim Spencer served to stabilize Louisiana College. For more than five years, Lee would provide protection for the faculty and its academic freedom. This does not mean that Robert Lynn's leadership was deficient. He deserves much credit for enhancing the college's academic reputation and fending off initial attacks on academic freedom. But Rory Lee was a candidate who could buy the institution some time as the Conservative Resurgence unfolded. He could see the faculty's angle and appreciated academic freedom, but being an outsider he could provide some fresh objectivity in listening to the concerns of Louisiana Baptists. But like Lynn before him, impatience on the part of some within the convention and a familiar figure in the initial controversy would re-emerge to challenge his leadership and make even more stringent demands of the faculty.

⁹⁶ "Settlement reached in La. lawsuit profs filed against conservatives," in *Baptist Press*, March 11, 1998.

CHAPTER VII

NEW CENTURY, OLD ARGUMENTS

One would think that issues of academic freedom would have been settled for Louisiana College by 2001, if not nearly a century earlier when most institutions of higher education formulated their philosophies of the concept. And one would surmise the settlement reached with the four professors in early 1998 would discourage interference with future academic policies and governance. But the issues were not settled for Louisiana Baptists, and ultimately not for Louisiana College. The SACS-COC accreditation reaffirmation team that visited the college in 2001 included within their recommendations directions for protecting the college against the attacks that had plagued the faculty and administration in 1995-1996.¹ Recommendation eleven suggested that “the governing body and institution ensure that the administration be protected from external pressures that may interfere with the accomplishment of its educational process.”² Recommendation twelve called for trustees and the college to ensure “a clear line of distinction between the policy-making functions of the governing body and the responsibility of the faculty and administration to administer and implement policy.”³

¹ Louisiana College SACS-COC reaffirmation committee to SACS-COC, response to recommendations for reaffirmation of accreditation, fall 2001, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

² Ibid., 132.

³ Ibid.

In responding to the recommendations, the college replied that the selection of trustees by the Louisiana Baptist Convention and its substantial financial contribution meant that the trustees would reflect the concerns of the convention, but that historically the governing body had viewed its role as independent of the convention, offering one exception, the period during the mid-1990s when some members of the board overstepped their boundaries.⁴ The response emphasized that this had not been an issue since 1997.⁵ For their part, the board of trustees, at their September meeting, took two actions to answer the recommendations and bring the college into compliance and ensure that re-affirmation of accreditation would be granted at the December SACS-COC annual meeting.⁶ They passed a resolution affirming their current practice of dealing only with policy issues and deferring day-to-day operations to the administration.⁷ The board took further action by removing the provision that the academic affairs committee of the board of trustees approve faculty candidates before a contract could be issued, and granting the president the authority to extend a contract to be approved at the next trustee meeting by a vote of the full board.⁸

President Lee and the faculty had to be feeling some relief as 2001 ended. After all, the college was re-affirmed for another decade. The faculty may have even interpreted the reassignment of power to grant faculty contracts to President Lee rather than the controversial academic affairs committee as a resumption of normal activities.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid., 133.

⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

The convention seemed to trust Lee, and the accrediting body supported the exclusion of external influence in the college's operations. So as had been since Lee became president, all was well on Holy Hill.

This entente all began to change with the re-emergence of a conservative faction within the Louisiana Baptist Convention. The Louisiana Conservative Resurgency was re-branded "LIFe," or "The Louisiana Inerrancy Fellowship." That year the group presented a number of resolutions and a motion to the college's board of trustees.⁹ LIFe's resolutions were critical of higher education and church-related higher education specifically. Liberalism was labeled the "cancer of biblical Christianity," and denominational colleges and seminaries were denoted as "hotbeds of liberalism."¹⁰ Faculty members were singled out as "sowers and cultivators of liberalism."¹¹ The power to hire and grant tenure to faculty was identified as critical in assuring that the board of trustees was protecting the college against anti-Baptist forces.¹² Louisiana Baptists were, according to LIFe, largely inerrantists, opposed to homosexuality as a lifestyle, creationists, pro-life, and adherers to *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.¹³

⁹ Louisiana Inerrancy Fellowship, proposal, 2002, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Given their beliefs regarding colleges and what they presumed to be the universal beliefs of Louisiana Baptists, the members of LIFe asked that the tenure process be amended to include a number of additional requirements of candidates for tenure or tenure-track positions.¹⁴ First, all candidates would appear before the academic affairs committee for a review, a step that sounded much like the inquisition of Lawanda Smith and precisely what had been removed a year earlier to comply with the recommendations of the SACS-COC team.¹⁵ Next, faculty members would submit a statement of opinion to the chairman of the academic affairs committee ten days before the review, addressing the following issues: inerrancy; *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*; evolution; abortion; homosexuality; and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.¹⁶ Finally, candidates would submit a letter from their pastor, addressing their character and church attendance.¹⁷

The demands made by LIFe in 2002 went beyond what the conservative faction had demanded in the mid-1990s. But the motives remained the same, to influence the selection and purging of faculty based on their beliefs, and an emphasis was added for faculty opinions on social issues. The group did appear to be more interested in the tenure process, perhaps out of a desire to avoid hiring faculty members like Winbery, Downing, Heath, and Douglas, who because of their rank and the lawsuit settlement, were difficult to dismiss. While LIFe was a new organization it had a familiar leader, Leon Hyatt.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

The agenda for the September meeting of academic affairs committee and meeting notes, including a recommendation from the special committee on hiring and tenure, indicate that some on the board of trustees took the LIFe recommendations seriously.¹⁸ The special committee comprised of Michael Brunet, a physician, and Fred Malone, Tommy Middleton, and Joe Neson, all clergymen, proposed a goal of “a consistently Christian posture in all academic instruction.”¹⁹ They submitted a list of seven principles and recommendations to the academic affairs committee.²⁰ The first principle called for the faculty and administration to believe and teach that Christianity was the only true faith, and that faith in Christ was the only way to go to heaven.²¹ The second recognized that those within the college community were to challenge the wisdom of the world.²² The third affirmed that a Christian faculty should be pro-life, affirm the traditional view of marriage, and reject homosexual practices.²³ This sounded much like the LIFe motion. Four, five, and six affirmed the Ten Commandments, the divinity of Christ, and the resurrection.²⁴ Seven called upon Louisiana Baptists to pray for and support the college financially.²⁵ The committee also called upon the academic affairs

¹⁸ Louisiana College Academic Affairs Committee, agenda and meeting notes, September 16, 2002, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

committee to recommend that Louisiana College join the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), as membership would provide educational resources for current faculty and administration, supply the college a pool of applicants for faculty positions who would be unapologetically Christian and enthusiastic about Christianity.²⁶

After the report of the special committee, a discussion ensued concerning the meaning of a Christian worldview.²⁷ It was defined as pro-life, anti-homosexual, and creationist.²⁸ The committee shared its vision of bringing the college more in line with mainstream evangelical colleges, with *The Baptist Faith and Message* used as an instrument of trust in hiring faculty.²⁹ Union University, located in Jackson, Tennessee, was hailed as an example to emulate.³⁰ In the end, the motion to join the CCCU passed, but no vote was taken to accept the special committee's recommendation for hiring and granting faculty tenure.³¹

Carlton Winbery offered a response to the LIFe proposal and the recommendations made by the special committee to the board of trustees in a letter addressed to the faculty.³² He said that if the goals of LIFe were realized then it would

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., 3.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Carlton Winbery, "The Louisiana Inerrancy Fellowship and the Louisiana Baptist Convention," letter to faculty, fall 2002, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

mean the death of the college as they had known it.³³ In his opinion, no current faculty member could survive what was being proposed, and referencing the re-affirmation visit he pointed out that the suggestion to change the hiring practices could jeopardize the college's long-term status with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.³⁴ Winbery reasoned that the entire campaign to question faculty members and potential faculty members was tied to the inerrancy issue which had plagued the Southern Baptist Convention for better than two decades.³⁵

At the September 2003 board meeting, the trustees did pass a new policy for hiring faculty, requiring that those applying for full-time positions submit a written statement of their views on the sanctity of human life, the sanctity of the family, and creation.³⁶ The applicants would also be required to meet with the academic affairs committee of the board of trustees.³⁷ Not surprisingly the faculty counsel responded by calling a special faculty meeting to approve a letter condemning the policy as detrimental to the future of the college for three reasons.³⁸ The letter noted that the policy was drafted without any faculty input, thus negating the principle of shared governance,

³³ Ibid., 1.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Louisiana College Faculty Council to Louisiana College faculty members, November 11, 2003, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

³⁷ Ibid., 1.

³⁸ Ibid., 2.

which was guaranteed in the faculty handbook.³⁹ The 2001 SACS-COC report was also referenced.⁴⁰ The counsel suggested that the practice would hurt the college's academic reputation because some would assume that faculty were hired for religious reasons rather than for their qualifications in the respected fields.⁴¹ They tied this to students who might find employment or acceptance into graduate school more difficult because of assumptions made about the caliber of their instructors.⁴²

Finally the counsel argued that the policy would discourage many quality applicants who would shrink from such an intrusive process, leaving the college to settle for less capable scholars.⁴³ They reasoned that some applicants, desperate for a position, might tweak their answers such to gain employment.⁴⁴ The letter referenced the low salaries earned by current faculty, and suggested that this was another roadblock.⁴⁵ In closing, the letter reminded trustees that the faculty had worked hard to maintain and promote the college, and asked them to reconsider the policy passed at the September meeting.⁴⁶ On November 14, the faculty voted to send the letter board of trustees.⁴⁷

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

At the December board meeting, a draconian resolution on choosing classroom texts was presented to the board.⁴⁸ The proposal included many references to *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*. Much attention was given to reasons for faculty dismissal, including moral turpitude which was defined as engaging in any kind of pre- or extra-marital sexual relationship, homosexuality, or promoting any non-traditional sexual relationship.⁴⁹ It called the college morally obligated to the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the convention's principle that the Bible was inerrant.⁵⁰ It suggested that the board consider a violation of its stance that classroom materials support *The 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.⁵¹ It said that faculty members should be considered in violation if they chose materials that were contrary to the faith statement, and said the board should require the president to include as an agenda item for all future board meetings a report of compliance or noncompliance with the policy on classroom materials.⁵² Apparently some cooler heads prevailed because the resulting resolution was one that eliminated language about immediate dismissals, and merely called attention to current policies, reminding faculty that their choices of textbooks should be made with attention to the college's relationship to the Louisiana Baptist Convention.⁵³

⁴⁸ Louisiana College Board of Trustees, proposed resolution on choice of classroom materials, December, 2003, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

⁴⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Louisiana College Board of Trustees, resolution on choice of classroom materials, December 2, 2003, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

But the trustees did not stop with a resolution, as they passed a new policy for academic materials on their second meeting day, calling for all materials to be relevant to the respective subject, appropriate in content, not expensive or difficult to obtain, and recognized by others in the field as appropriate.⁵⁴ The new policy also removed the final decision on texts and classroom materials from the course instructor and required that the department chair and vice president for academic affairs sign off on all materials.⁵⁵ The policy was to be effective December 2, and would require that all spring 2004 course texts be approved.⁵⁶ In his letter to faculty, staff, students, alumni, and friends President Lee admitted that he had requested two books be removed from the bookstore, but that these texts had not been banned.⁵⁷ He argued that the texts, *A Lesson Before Dying*, by Ernest Gaines, and *The Road Less Traveled*, by Scott Peck, were not in use in fall 2003 and were in the storeroom of the college bookstore.⁵⁸ Lee's letter seemed conciliatory, aimed at calming faculty and student fears, but careful to remind all that the purpose of the new policy was to comply with language in the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*, which called for a balance between academic freedom and responsibility.⁵⁹ He concluded that many misunderstandings had arisen in light of the policy change.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Rory Lee to Louisiana College students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends, December 5, 2003, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

A *Baptist Press* article released later that week shed more light on the trustees' thinking and the campus community's reaction.⁶¹ Trustee Fred Malone said the new policy was needed to bring some accountability to a practice that left students who were offended by materials only the opportunity to file a complaint.⁶² For him, it was a matter of adding some layers to the academic governance.⁶³ The faculty was not appeased by Lee's statement, and voted forty-eight to eight to adopt an official response decrying the trustees' policy, calling it censorship.⁶⁴ Their resolution also said the policy violated the current academic freedom policy, damaged the college's reputation, demeaned the community, and was inconsistent with American higher education.⁶⁵

As 2003 ended, a series of letters to the editor of *The Town Talk* indicated that the alumni and community remained rather divided on the issues of academic freedom in a Baptist college. Alumnus Billy Miller wrote that some students and faculty were not aware that the college was a Baptist liberal arts college, and that Baptist preceded liberal.⁶⁶ Tracing his own college experience back to the 1960s, he suggested that the college had long been emphasizing the liberal over the Baptist.⁶⁷ He reported that when

⁶¹ "College trustees revise textbook selection policy," in *Baptist Press*, December 9, 2003.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 2.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Billy Miller, "LC: Love it or leave it," editorial in *The Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, December 18, 2003.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 1.

he complained of the campus climate then, President Guinn invited him to shut up or pack up.⁶⁸ Miller said his friends on the board of trustees were trying to put the emphasis back on Baptist theology, and reasoned that President Lee's letter was sufficient.⁶⁹ He invited those faculty and students who did not accept the new policy to learn to love it or leave!⁷⁰

For seven years, President Lee appeared to strike a balance between conservatives within the convention, their appointees on the board of trustees, and the faculty, but as fall 2003 unfolded his ability to placate all parties faltered as the textbook policy was approved and the faculty felt alienated. It was of little surprise when he resigned on March 15, 2004, just a few days after Ben Hawkins, vice president for academic affairs, offered his own resignation.⁷¹ Lee was leaving to accept the position of executive director of the Mississippi Baptist Children's home, and he offered nothing but well wishes for Louisiana College, never mentioning the controversy.⁷² He chose the high road, as the press release mentioned the positives of his tenure: twenty-three percent increase in enrollment; forty-percent more faculty with earned doctorates; fund balance up five-hundred thousand dollars; and a list of building projects and improvements.⁷³

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Louisiana College president leaves, VP resigns, as trustees weather protests," in *Associated Baptist Press*, March 16, 2004.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

Lee's term would end at the May graduation ceremony, and the college would again find itself, as it had just eight years earlier, without a president or a chief academic officer while enduring serious questions about the future. The issues that plagued President Lynn in his last years as president plagued Lee in his final months. But unlike Lynn, Lee tried to find a middle ground, or so it seems. In the end, it appears that the faculty and the board were so far apart in their ideas about academic freedom that Lee's concessions were not enough. Perhaps the board was so overwhelmingly conservative, unlike years earlier when only a fraction of the board was calling for sweeping changes to the academic processes. Thomas Howell, longtime professor of history, echoed the fears of many when he suggested that the departure of Lee might open the door for the conservatives to appoint someone who would rubber stamp their full agenda for the college.⁷⁴ Indeed it was a new century, but the same old arguments about academic freedom persisted on Holy Hill.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 1.

CHAPTER VIII

AN INSTITUTION IN CHAOS

The changes in policy for the approval of classroom materials combined with the departure of President Rory Lee and Vice President for Academic Affairs Ben Hawkins at the end of the spring 2004 semester resulted in a year of chaos for Louisiana College. The strife included conflicts within the board of trustees, questions from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools that eventually resulted in probation, a troubled presidential search that yielded a candidate who was not selected as a finalist by the appointed search committee, a lawsuit, a faculty no-confidence vote, and student and alumni protests. Unlike the departure of President Lynn, there would be no final year for Lee, and thus the search for his successor was hurried and the absence of a permanent leader for the college left many faculty and staff feeling vulnerable.

A week after he announced he was resigning as president, President Lee received a letter from Rudolph Jackson, an associate director with SACS-COC, indicating that articles appearing in the local and national press hinted that there were issues with regard to academic freedom at the college, as well as concerns that the board of trustees was overstepping its role by not relegating day-to-day activities to the administration.¹ Jackson asked Lee to provide documentation and policies that demonstrated that Louisiana College was in compliance with the association's principles regarding governance and administration and academic freedom.² The next day, trustee Leon Hyatt

¹ Rudolph Jackson to Rory Lee, March 23, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

² Ibid., 1.

wrote board chairman Joe Nesom and President Lee, asking for a special called board meeting.³ The email, also signed by William Smith, Patrick Sexton, Mark Sparks, Roy Strother, John Traylor, Lonnie Wascom, and Lloyd Whitman expressed concern that there was a “rupture in the fellowship,” and that meeting sooner rather than later would prevent it from growing worse.⁴ Nesom had called for Mary Moffett, the board secretary, to resign.⁵ The reason for writing was that only Lee and Nesom were legally capable of scheduling a board meeting, and the seven requested that the meeting be held off-campus on April 17, at the Holiday Inn.⁶ The seven indicated that twenty-two members of the board, fifteen plus their group, were in favor of the special meeting with the purpose of electing either an interim or permanent president, discussing and acting on the resolution on classroom materials presented by Leon Hyatt that was previously rejected in favor of the milder policy the previous December, and discussing any matters of concern to a single trustee.⁷ The following day, Joe Nesom emailed the board, announcing a special meeting for April 19, to be held on campus, for the purpose of electing an interim president and discussing and taking action on the textbook resolution previously rejected.⁸

³ Leon Hyatt to Rory Lee and Joe Nesom, e-mail, March 24, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

⁴ Ibid., 1.

⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Joe Nesom to board of trustees, e-mail, March 25, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

A few weeks later President Lee responded to Rudolph Jackson's request for information regarding academic freedom and governance with a packet of emails and other materials.⁹ Lee's response to Jackson was unlike his resignation as he cast aspersions upon and provided much evidence that some on the board of trustees were working to undermine the administration. Lee maintained that the academic freedom policy was not violated as the administration had permitted the faculty to re-value their own courses and make adjustments, noting that the vice president for academic affairs did not make any suggestions for changes to classroom materials.¹⁰

President Lee did indicate that he believed the association's principles for governance and administration and the role of the governing board had been violated.¹¹ He enclosed a letter mailed to him the previous May by trustee Carl Carrigan demanding that he fire a number of professors for requiring pornographic readings and prescribing liberal beliefs that "polluted students."¹² In his letter Carrigan said that Lee had supervised and consented to the methods of the professors.¹³ In closing he told Lee that he still had hope that Lee would "do the right thing and make a difference."¹⁴

⁹ Rory Lee to Rudolph Jackson, April 9, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁰ Ibid., 1.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 1, Attachment E.

¹³ Ibid., Attachment E.

¹⁴ Ibid.

President Lee mentioned meetings among several trustees, including Hyatt and Carrigan, and football coach Marty Secord, where student life issues, specifically student discipline, were criticized.¹⁵ He also referenced a meeting in the summer of 2003 in which the chair of the education department, Joe Aguillard, met with several trustees and LIFe, to discuss textbooks and classroom materials.¹⁶ Lee attached portions of the college's handbook on shared governance, suggesting that these meetings were a clear violation of protocol.¹⁷ Lee submitted emails from Leon Hyatt including summaries of meetings of the minority of the board of trustees and invitations to additional "unofficial meetings."¹⁸

The summaries indicate that those present at the meetings reviewed the lawsuit filed by Winbery, Downing, Heath, and Douglas, concluding that the college could not take any action against them for action prior to the day the settlement was signed, but that the protection did not extend to any other members of the faculty.¹⁹ The trustees spent hours reviewing testimonies of questionable classroom materials, injustices in discipline cases handled by the dean of students, and statistics that showed increasing tuition over the past five years.²⁰ The group identified a group of trustees to be voted on the

¹⁵ Ibid., 2.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid., 2, Attachment C.

¹⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁹ Ibid., Attachment F.

²⁰ Ibid.

executive committee of the board.²¹ Finally the group discussed re-submitting Hyatt's original recommendation that failed in December.²² In a second email, Hyatt expressed frustration that the executive committee was ignoring the will of the full board regarding the selection of a new president and vice president for academic affairs.²³ He asked the members of the board to ask chairman Nesom to call a special meeting, to discuss the issues.²⁴

Lee wrote to Jackson that Hyatt had been appointed to the board in November 2003, and gave his history with the college, noting the lawsuit that was settled in 1998.²⁵ He also mentioned the goals LIFe had prescribed for the college in 2002 and included a copy.²⁶ President Lee promised to provide any other relevant materials that might surface after the April 19 meeting of the trustees.²⁷ While it is impossible to pinpoint what the trigger event was, something moved him to spill the proverbial beans on Hyatt and other conservatives on the board of trustees. Perhaps it was frustration that their interference had derailed his presidency, and that the issues that plagued him his final few months might preclude him from future presidencies. Or maybe it was a genuine concern for the college and its faculty. Or maybe this was posturing so if Lee were considered for another presidency he could point to the letter as evidence that he had blown the whistle

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., Attachment G.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid., 2.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid, 3.

on the rogue trustees. Whatever the cause, President Lee's final act as president likely paved the way for the probation that would be handed down at the SACS-COC annual meeting in December.

While Lee was providing private criticism of the conservative faction on the board of trustees, one of his predecessors, G. Earl Guinn, who served as president from 1951 to 1975, agreed to an interview with *The Town Talk*. While the interview covered a range of topics, the questions touched on the brewing controversy, and the ninety-one year old Guinn offered public criticism.²⁸ He told the paper that he would not want to be president of a contemporary Baptist college, particularly Louisiana College, given the Conservative Resurgence and its impact on Baptist institutions.²⁹ Guinn traced the controversy's impact on Louisiana College to the end of Lynn's presidency, and reasoned that Rory Lee must have known that he was taking a difficult job with a politically divisive board of trustees.³⁰ He interpreted Lee's resignation as a sign that the conservatives on the board had "made it impossible for him to retain his integrity and stay as president."³¹

When asked if the issues at Louisiana College could be resolved, Guinn said from a factual standpoint he saw a gloomy future for the college.³² But he said that his faith

²⁸ "Q&A with former Louisiana College president" in *The Town Talk*, March 28, 2004.

²⁹ Ibid., 4.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 5.

and the college's resilience through the years gave him hope for a better season.³³ Guinn interpreted the Louisiana College dilemma as one primarily related to money.³⁴ He said the Baptist colleges and universities with large endowments and strong alumni support were able to sever ties with their state Baptist conventions and avoid problems.³⁵ Louisiana College, because of its size and dependence on the Louisiana Baptist Convention's financial contributions which he had sought during his presidency, was locked into a close governance relationship with the convention.³⁶ Guinn suggested that the conservatives on the board were appointed primarily to dismiss faculty members, chief among them the members of the religion department, who he credited as being the college's finest scholars.³⁷ He predicted that the college under conservative control would become far less than it had been academically.³⁸

The plan to submit the original Hyatt proposal for textbooks and classroom materials at the April 19 trustee meeting was covered by various papers, including *The Baptist Standard: The Newsmagazine of Texas Baptists*.³⁹ The article also referenced that Hyatt was seeking to replace the board officers.⁴⁰ Professor Thomas Howell was quoted

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ "Louisiana College considers textbook policy," in *The Baptist Standard: The Newsmagazine of Texas Baptists*, April 16, 2004.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 1.

as saying that the proposed policy which prohibited “the approval or portrayal of profanity, sexual activity outside of marriage, homosexuality, pornography or other illicit sexual expressions” would preclude several passages from the Bible.⁴¹ He also commented that the policy, if applied broadly, would hinder the offering of a liberal arts education.⁴² Trustee Kent Aguillard, brother of Joe Aguillard, the chair of the teacher education department, disagreed, suggesting that the trustees’ goal was to offer a liberal arts education within the context of what Baptists believed as outlined in the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.⁴³

At the April 19 meeting, the trustees again rejected the Hyatt proposal, affirming the December policy.⁴⁴ Reports were that the vote was split, but an actual tally was not released to the public.⁴⁵ The trustees did not move to appoint a permanent president, but did elect an interim president from among the board, retired pastor John “Bud” Traylor, who would begin serving on May 17 when Lee’s resignation was effective.⁴⁶ Shortly after the trustee meeting the faculty met and passed a conciliatory resolution, saying that they understood the board had an obligation to the Louisiana Baptist Convention to

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ “Louisiana College trustees re-affirm textbook policy,” in *Associated Baptist Press*, April 20, 2004.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

uphold the college's Christian heritage and Baptist roots.⁴⁷ The faculty wanted the board to know that they respected the college's heritage and roots, and chose to teach there because of the college's foundation.⁴⁸ They did express that they had consistently chosen texts that were in agreement with the principles of the Christian faith, and asked the trustees to include them in the adoption of a new policy, so as to avoid complications with accreditation.⁴⁹ In closing, they pledged to continue to offer "an education grounded in the liberal arts tradition, informed by the Christian faith, and committed to academic excellence," a line from the mission statement.⁵⁰

In his first week as interim president, John "Bud" Traylor read the evaluations completed by students who took Fred Downing and Connie Douglas' values course in spring 2004, the one that drew the ire of the contributors to Hyatt's packet in 1995 and the course that used *The Road Less Traveled* and *A Lesson Before Dying* as supplemental readings.⁵¹ The evaluations were positive, and Traylor enclosed the responses in a letter to the trustees.⁵² Forty-nine of the fifty students who took the course responded that the books and films used were very appropriate or appropriate.⁵³ Forty-six of the students

⁴⁷ Louisiana College faculty, resolution, spring 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

⁴⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 1.

⁵¹ John "Bud" Traylor to Louisiana College trustees, May 24, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁵² Ibid., 1.

⁵³ Ibid.

rated the course as either a good course or the best course they had taken at Louisiana College.⁵⁴ Traylor wrote that he believed the key factor when judging a course's materials is how they are utilized by the instructor, and that the students who took the values course believed Downing and Douglas shared the materials in helpful ways.⁵⁵ He also said the evaluations were available in the president's office for viewing by the trustees.⁵⁶ Traylor's assessment of the controversial values course was an endorsement of the faculty, and called into question the accusations made by the conservative faction of trustees, a group that Traylor had been a part of earlier. The gesture by Traylor to support Downing and Douglas began what would be a positive relationship between him and the faculty for the duration of his interim presidency.

A series of phone conversations in the summer of 2004 between English professor Linda Peevy and Joe Nesom, who would resign from the board, revealed that the conservative faction on the board had been frustrated with Rory Lee's leadership for some time, and they had an insider who was providing them with fodder.⁵⁷ According to Nesom, he was made aware of a secret meeting among a minority of the trustees to be held in May, 2003, by a trustee, Bill Robertson, who had resigned from the board.⁵⁸ The meeting was to be held at Trinity Baptist Church in Pineville, pastored by Darryl

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Joe Nesom to Whom It May Concern, letter and phone conversation transcriptions, July 27, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2.

Hoychick who had returned to the board in fall 2003.⁵⁹ Hoychick extended an invitation to Nesom, but insisted that the meeting was limited to people “who could be trusted.”⁶⁰

Nesom attended the meeting in which trustees Alan Shoumaker, Craig James, Mary Moffett, and Leon Hyatt, spoke about the issues at the college.⁶¹ Hyatt accused President Lee of telling him to get out of his office when he stopped by to discuss what he thought were issues at the college. Lee allegedly told Hyatt that he was not going to treat him the way he had treated Robert Lynn.⁶² Hoychick expressed frustration that Lee was not firing professors, and Carl Carrigan said President Lee was not the man they thought he was when he was hired.⁶³ Joe Aguillard, chair of the teacher education department, was a featured speaker, sharing that he believed his daughter’s participation in the London semester and readings assigned by the English department, specifically D.H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love* and writings by Virginia Woolfe, caused her to experiment with homosexuality and attempt suicide.⁶⁴ Nesom shared that a few weeks before his phone conversations began with Peevy, Joe Aguillard had called him, sharing more about his daughter’s experience and asking if he had discussed the meeting at Trinity Baptist Church in 2003 with the English department.⁶⁵ At some point Aguillard

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid., 3.

⁶³ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 3.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

suggested that he would make a good academic vice president. Nesom said this caught his attention.⁶⁶ As the summer of 2004 faded into fall, it became clear that Joe Aguillard was involved in the meetings that led to President Lee's problems with the trustees and ultimate resignation. His reported testimony against the English department created a level of distrust between himself and most of the college faculty. This would only worsen as the presidential search unfolded, and it was learned that he was an applicant for the presidency.

As the fall commenced Don Sprowl, a math professor, who was serving as interim vice president for academic affairs, gave a state of the college address at the fall faculty workshop.⁶⁷ He said he felt the need to begin by characterizing the faculty as an irreplaceable academic resource rather than as the instructional employees some on the board of trustees had relegated them.⁶⁸ Sprowl traced the controversy plaguing the college to the Southern Baptist Convention's Conservative Resurgency, and referenced President Lynn's 1991 chapel address on academic freedom as the first indication that the larger controversy was impacting Louisiana College.⁶⁹ Sprowl mentioned that SACS would be coming to campus during the first week of September to follow up on concerns stemming from the change in policy for classroom materials.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁷ Don Sprowl, "State of the College," typescript of remarks given at faculty convocation, Pineville, Louisiana, August 16, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 3.

In his analysis of the crisis, Sprowl suggested that the disagreement was rooted in the differing educational philosophies.⁷¹ He said that one philosophy, that of some on the board on the trustees and within the Louisiana Baptist Convention, valued scholarship as “a utilitarian service to success in the world.”⁷² This approach was particularly concerned with protecting young people, students, from worldly influences.⁷³ As such, some classroom materials, irrespective of their context, were inappropriate and could not be used.⁷⁴ The second philosophy, the one of the faculty, considered the purpose of education to be the preparation of young people for engaging the world.⁷⁵ As such, scholarship was valued for itself, and students and faculty should be free to examine any materials within their context, so that they could be prepared for the issues they would encounter in the larger world.⁷⁶

Sprowl said that the methods employed by the faculty during the previous year were reactionary and ineffective.⁷⁷ He said some on the board viewed those actions to be misbehavior, and the trustees were looking into changing the faculty handbook, a move that could be interpreted as a means of “reining in faculty.”⁷⁸ Sprowl repeated that the

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 4.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 6.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

losses in leadership were brutal: the president; vice president for academic affairs; three faculty members; and the chairman of the board of trustees.⁷⁹ He also shared that enrollment and retention would be diminished because of the turmoil.⁸⁰ Sprowl called on the faculty to be proactive rather than reactive, designing a course of action that would “preserve academic freedom, allow them to accomplish their educational tasks, foster an environment of trust where questions could be debated freely, and please the trustees.”⁸¹ He said that failure to meet the first three goals would mean there would be no college; the failure to do the fourth would mean the loss of the ability to do the first three.⁸²

In an email to the faculty council ten days later, Sprowl provided an update on whether the faculty could provide an alternative academic freedom plan.⁸³ Sprowl had written a letter with the content from his faculty workshop address, and Fred Malone, the chair of the academic affairs committee, had promised to bring the letter to the committee, but shared that he was afraid the board would deny the faculty involvement in the process.⁸⁴ Sprowl shared that he was worried that the assertion that faculty be involved would be taken as an “I told you so,” if the special committee for SACS sanctioned the college, but he did not want to send it and offend Malone and other

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Don Sprowl to faculty council, e-mail, August 26, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1.

members of the committee.⁸⁵ More troubling in Sprowl's communication was his expressed fear that Louisiana Baptists would tilt toward the educational philosophy that was concerned with protecting students from over-exposing them to ideas and materials that could be taken to be offensive out of context.⁸⁶ His worry was based on listening to Traylor and Malone talk, and his sense was that they and many Louisiana Baptists simply believed that at a Christian college there are "materials that should not be permitted in the classroom."⁸⁷

In early September, the faculty council wrote Sprowl, asking that the faculty, at the next scheduled faculty meeting, be permitted to take a no-confidence vote in Joe Aguiard as a candidate for president of Louisiana College.⁸⁸ The group offered general and personal rationales. In terms of general rationale reasons listed included their belief that no current professor or administrator at the college was qualified to lead the institution given the crisis. Aguiard was not one who had the necessary liberal arts and fundraising experience.⁸⁹ As for personal rationale, the faculty council suggested that Aguiard's close connection to LIFe and his attendance at meetings precluded him from being a good candidate.⁹⁰ They predicted that his selection as president would intensify

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Faculty Council to Don Sprowl, September 3, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

⁸⁹ Ibid., 1.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

the controversy and result in more problems.⁹¹ They also referenced concerns that Aguillard's implementation of a graduate degree in teaching arts, essentially a master's degree comprised of courses previously included in an alternate certification program for those with degrees in fields other than education, had been based on misinformation.⁹² The degree was rejected by SACS, and the faculty believed that this was because the program was designed without input and considerations.⁹³ They called the rejection an embarrassment for the college.⁹⁴ Finally the faculty referenced that Aguillard had filed a grievance against an unnamed faculty member, threatening legal action, a move that violated the process outlined in the internal policy manual.⁹⁵

The faculty council offered to keep their vote secret, if Aguillard were to receive a no-confidence vote and withdraw his name from consideration.⁹⁶ If he were to withdraw his name, still be offered the presidency, but refuse the offer then the vote would be kept on file in the vice president for academic affairs' office.⁹⁷ If Aguillard were to refuse to withdraw from the process and accept the position, then the vote would be presented to the board of trustees, *The Town Talk*, and *The Baptist Message*.⁹⁸ In closing they asked

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 2.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

that Aguillard, if given a vote of no-confidence, submit his intentions to the vice president for academic affairs.⁹⁹ The vote of no-confidence was not taken at the September faculty meeting, as Aguillard was not one of the three finalists selected.¹⁰⁰

The top candidate to succeed Rory Lee was Malcolm Yarnell, a professor of theology at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.¹⁰¹ The board meeting minutes in which Yarnell was interviewed indicate that he was not only a conservative theologian but also possessed a strong personality.¹⁰² This would explain some of the circumstances that would unfold later in the fall. Yarnell shared that his previous administrative post was short, just over two years at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and had unraveled when he mishandled the dismissal of a professor resulting in a financial settlement.¹⁰³

When asked about the Louisiana College academic freedom policy, Yarnell labeled it “theologically problematic,” suggesting that it be suspended immediately and that the president be added to the faculty handbook committee.¹⁰⁴ When asked how SACS would interpret the insertion of the president onto the committee, Yarnell answered that SACS often put colleges on probation for political reasons not substantive

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Louisiana College Board of Trustees, meeting minutes, September, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 1.

ones.¹⁰⁵ He assured the board that he would visit SACS and “smooth things over.”¹⁰⁶

Yarnell offered many answers that seemed to fit the goals of LIFe. He said the president and academic dean should reflect the board’s character, and asked if the entire faculty had signed the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.¹⁰⁷ Yarnell classified the statement as a confession and an authoritative document that should be used to determine whether something should be taught or not. And he concluded that if classroom content contrary to the statement was used then a faculty member should be dismissed for lack of integrity.¹⁰⁸ For him, dismissals for lack of integrity were permissible for tenured professors.¹⁰⁹ Yarnell reasoned that the lack of scholarly productivity on the part of faculty was an indication that some may be hiding what they taught.¹¹⁰ His conclusion was that Louisiana College needed a stronger president, that the faculty was “ruling the school.”¹¹¹

After Yarnell was identified as the lead candidate, board chairman Bill Hudson allowed Mary Moffett, a member of the search committee, to offer a “minority report.”¹¹² Calling the situation at the college a crisis, she argued that the search committee had little

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

experience in selecting chief executive officers, evidenced by their preclusion of the only candidate she believed had the administrative experience including fiscal management and legal issues: Joe Aguillard.¹¹³ She identified Yarnell as a possible choice for chairman of the religion department, and reasoned that his identification was the result of a search committee comprised of preachers.¹¹⁴ For the minority, Aguillard was an academic administrator and a man of integrity and virtue, just the person the college needed in its hour of crisis.¹¹⁵

Yarnell was ultimately offered the job as president by the board. Things quieted on the campus for a few weeks while some of the details in Yarnell's contract were finalized. But the month of November proved troubling in many aspects. First, the results of the SACS special committee were released, and their finding that the college was out of compliance with the standards of accreditation caused uproar among the faculty.¹¹⁶ The same week, it was announced that Yarnell, for reasons related to governance, had decided to rescind his acceptance of the presidency.¹¹⁷

Professor of English Rosanne Osborne sent an email to Don Sprowl, informing him that she had asked Bill Simpson for the faculty to take a no confidence vote on the trustees. She wanted to make it clear to the convention, SACS, and the community where

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Louisiana College Faculty, draft of resolution on accreditation, November 12, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

the faculty stood.¹¹⁸ The faculty passed a resolution of no-confidence in the board citing a litany of issues, ranging from ignoring SACS standards to insisting on such control of daily activities that Yarnell withdrew his acceptance of the presidency.¹¹⁹ The resolution included language regarding the actions of political groups on the board pursuing the interest of outside groups, a clear reference to LIFe.¹²⁰ The faculty, in their resolution, singled out the board as reckless and responsible for endangering the college's accreditation with SACS.¹²¹

On December 7, at the annual SACS meeting, the board voted to put the college on probation for a period of one year, citing issues of governance related to the involvement of special interest groups pressuring the larger board to adopt policies.¹²² Ironically this was the very issue raised in the 1995 letter that Stan Lott received from SACS when the Louisiana Conservative Resurgency, the forerunner to LIFe, first began to influence the board of trustees.¹²³ Interim President Traylor and Don Sprowl were quoted in the press release, suggesting that the move by SACS was a call to take the necessary steps to move the college into compliance.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸ Roseanne Osborne to Don Sprowl, e-mail, November 24, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² John "Bud" Traylor, press release, December 7, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹²³ James Rogers to Stan Lott, September 8, 1995, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

¹²⁴ John "Bud" Traylor press release, 1.

The period between semesters, typically quiet for the college community, was anything but for the Louisiana College faculty as they anticipated what would come next for the college. On December 17, Bernard Gallagher, president of the Louisiana State University at Alexandria Faculty Senate, wrote Bill Simpson, offering a letter of support from their faculty.¹²⁵ He gave Simpson permission to release the letter to the media if Simpson thought it might help the cause.¹²⁶ Gallagher conceded that he believed he was observing a Greek tragedy moving toward a sad ending.¹²⁷

A few days after Christmas, Simpson learned that the original presidential search committee had resigned, and that a new search committee would meet on January 3 to recommend Joe Aguillard as president.¹²⁸ Simpson wrote the faculty council, asking for an emergency meeting to consider a full meeting of the faculty at which to take a no-confidence vote on Aguillard.¹²⁹ According to his letter the board had to give a ten-day notice before an official meeting was called, and Simpson believed there was still time to offer a public response to an Aguillard presidency.¹³⁰ He conceded that the calls for taking a no-confidence vote on Aguillard earlier may have been correct in hindsight, but

¹²⁵ Bernard Gallagher to William Simpson, e-mail, December 17, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ William Simpson to Faculty Council, memorandum, December 28, 2004, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

wondered if such a vote would be anything but symbolic.¹³¹ On January 6, the trustee officers held a press conference, announcing that the full board would meet on January 17 to vote on Aguillard as president.¹³²

Some trustees and alumni, including Stan Lott, former vice president for academic affairs, publicly argued that the move for a full board vote was illegal, as it violated the college's bylaws.¹³³ The disagreement centered on whether or not the original search committee which nominated Stan Norman, a professor at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, after Yarnell rescinded his acceptance, was still entrusted with the search for a president.¹³⁴ Board chairman Tim Johnson, who was elected in December, and other conservatives argued that the accreditation crisis called for a new president to be identified immediately.¹³⁵ He contended that Aguillard was a top-notch educator and theologically conservative.¹³⁶ Stan Lott disagreed, calling Aguillard a fundamentalist and questioning whether his education and experience qualified him to be president.¹³⁷ Lott said he and other alumni were preparing a lawsuit and a restraining order would be requested to block the vote on Aguillard.¹³⁸ Johnson said the vote was

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² "Louisiana College trustees nominate president, but lawsuit may block vote," in *Associated Baptist Press*, January 6, 2005.

¹³³ Ibid., 1.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 1-2.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 2.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 1.

legal, and had been vetted with the parliamentarian of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.¹³⁹ The new search committee, really an extension of the old search committee, was comprised of the original search committee plus the newly elected executive officers, making the total fifteen rather than nine.¹⁴⁰ The group had reconsidered Aguillard, although seven of the nine original members boycotted the January 3 meeting.¹⁴¹

In the days leading up to January 17, the faculty passed a no-confidence vote in Aguillard by a tally of fifty-three to twelve.¹⁴² As the board assembled for the meeting, more than two-hundred fifty faculty, staff, students, and alumni gathered on the campus to show their support for or opposition to Aguillard as president.¹⁴³ Before taking up the vote on Aguillard, the trustees voted nineteen to eight to affirm the new search committee.¹⁴⁴ In what was a marathon meeting, Aguillard was officially nominated by the search committee, as was popular interim president John “Bud” Traylor by a group of moderate trustees.¹⁴⁵ In addressing the assembly, Aguillard denied charges that he was a puppet of LIFe, saying he had only taken the abuse related to his candidacy in recent

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Doug Lederman. “A Fight Over Fundamentalism,” in *Inside Higher Ed*, January 10, 2005.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁴² “Louisiana College elects Aguillard as president amid campus turmoil,” in *Associated Baptist Press*, January 18, 2005.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 1.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

months for God, and that if selected he would increase the enrollment and lower tuition.¹⁴⁶ Traylor promised he would not serve long term, but wanted to be an option for them as Aguillard was too divisive and came with baggage that would not allow him to rise above the controversy.¹⁴⁷ In the wee morning hours of January 18, the trustees voted seventeen to thirteen to select Aguillard over Traylor.¹⁴⁸ Upon announcing Joe Aguillard's selection Tim Johnson, the chairman of the board, predicted that he would lead the college to its greatest days.¹⁴⁹ His contract was for five years, and Aguillard would assume the position immediately and be paid one-hundred twenty-five thousand dollars per year.¹⁵⁰

As Joe Aguillard moved into the president's office on January 18, 2005, the institutional chaos over who would become president that had ensued since the previous March when Rory Lee resigned subsided. Over the next several weeks, efforts to have Aguillard removed as president would fail in the courts. Alumni James Townsend, Ruth Townsend, Johnnye Jo Lott, Stan Lott, Ida Sampson, Donald Sampson, Jean Lively, Carlton Winbery, Sarah Aycock, and Sellers Aycock filed the suit alleging that the board of trustees erred in not turning to Stan Norman when Yarnell withdrew, an argument that hinged on the original search committee having ultimate authority to present candidates

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ "Louisiana College names Aguillard as new president in 17-13 vote" in *Baptist Press*, January 20, 2005.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 1.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

for president.¹⁵¹ Ultimately, however, because the bylaws gave the authority to fill any position at the college at a regular meeting of the board of trustees, the finding was for the trustees.¹⁵²

As the spring of 2005 progressed, some sense of normalcy returned. There were the usual campus events: classes, chapel, convocation, and commencement. But as the summer of 2005 unfolded, and President Aguiard began to hire his own staff of administrators, it became clear that business as usual at Louisiana College was no more. Over the next year, policies and processes would be written to redefine the meaning of academic freedom at Louisiana College. What had begun as a political effort a decade earlier to control what was taught in the classrooms at Louisiana College would be delivered by President Aguiard and his administration.¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ *Townsend v. Trustees of Louisiana College*, 9 La. 219, 569E (2005), 3.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 7.

CHAPTER IX

ACADEMIC FREEDOM REDEFINED

As President Aguiard began his tenure many were wondering how he would deliver the demands made by the conservatives on the board of trustees and how he would balance their expectations with the college's academic freedom policies. During the course of his first year, policies would be re-written to define academic freedom according to the philosophy of education favored by the conservatives on the board of trustees. Frustrations would mount for those on the faculty, and after one major showdown the administration's philosophy would be revealed. With the redefinition of academic freedom at Louisiana College many of the faculty would depart on their own accord, to work at institutions with traditional academic freedom policies.

In March, President Aguiard appointed three task forces to study the faculty handbook, academic freedom policy, and textbook policy.¹ The inclusion of trustees on the task forces caused concern among some members of the faculty, and Jim Crawford, professor of Spanish, wrote the faculty council, urging them to ask President Aguiard to involve the full faculty in the process.² He worried that the inclusion of the trustees might jeopardize the pending issue with SACS over shared governance, arguing that the issues being studied should originate from the faculty, be presented to the faculty for input and approval, and then be presented to the trustees to approve or deny based on

¹ Jim Crawford to faculty council, March 17, 2005, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

² Ibid., 1.

whether they meshed with the college's mission.³ Crawford said that the faculty had not been given any explanation of the process, and that President Aguiard putting the procedures in writing would go far in reducing distrust and fear among the campus community.⁴

In the summer of 2005, the academic freedom task force met three times and used a working document to trace where the college had been in terms of academic freedom and where it needed to go to comply with the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.⁵ In the new policy academic freedom was defined as "the right of each member of the academic community to pursue responsible inquiry within the mission of Louisiana College."⁶ The revised policy was to replace the 1991 policy which (in the minds of the conservative trustees) did not adequately restrict academic freedom to the institutional mission.⁷ Oddly enough, Rory Lee had defined academic freedom similarly upon his election as president in 1997.⁸ Perhaps the frustration was that this was not spelled out in policy, and thus not enforced in practice.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Louisiana College Faculty Handbook Task Force, working notes, summer 2005, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁸ "Rory Lee unanimous selection as Louisiana College president," in *Baptist Press*, April 2, 1997.

The revised policy went so far as to restrict a faculty member's writing, research, and public statements, requiring that they support the college's mission and be in accord with the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.⁹ The new academic freedom policy gave final authority to interpret the appropriateness of classroom materials to the president.¹⁰ Faculty members were urged to avoid discussion of sensitive and controversial topics, and to be careful when discussing such topics germane to their discipline, so as to avoid advocacy.¹¹ Furthermore, particularly sensitive topics were to be addressed without "visual exposure and verbal immersion into graphic or lewd depiction."¹² Perhaps the most interesting provision in the new policy was the procedure for complaints by persons not enrolled in courses at Louisiana College. Under the new policy the vice president for academic affairs was required to respond to complaints by third parties, and the faculty member whose course was in question was required to provide a written response to the vice president for academic affairs within fifteen school days.¹³ This process had been requested by LIFe in 2002 and its forerunner, Louisiana Conservative Resurgency, in 1995. Essentially faculty members were expected to teach in a manner that did not offend students taking their courses and persons not taking their courses.

⁹ Ibid., 3.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 5.

At the fall faculty workshop, a survey was distributed to the faculty asking them to offer input on the changes made to the academic freedom policy.¹⁴ Twenty of the surveys were returned, with five indicating they supported the policy and fifteen rejecting it.¹⁵ The comments are very telling. One wrote that they saw no justifiable reason for a complaint procedure for non-students.¹⁶ Another worried that a student could exploit this by not owning their grievance.¹⁷ There was concern that the president had final authority for interpreting academic freedom, with several suggesting that this authority should be vested within the vice president for academic affairs.¹⁸ Conversely, one commenter wrote, “To place the final authority and responsibility to interpret the academic freedom policy into the hands of one person is extremely dangerous and threatening to academic freedom, opening the door for bias, prejudice, and random persecution of individual professors or groups of professors by that person.”¹⁹ There were criticisms of the restriction of academic freedom to the institution’s mission.²⁰ One respondent wrote, “Following the logic of this restrictive phase, we run the same risk as that of the Catholic Church in the Middle Ages which stated that the earth was flat and that the sun revolved around the earth and that any disagreement with this institutional standard or norm would

¹⁴ Academic Freedom Task Force, workshop notes, August 22, 2005, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

be tolerated.”²¹ Another suggested that the institution’s norms were being placed above pursuit of God’s truth.²²

The restriction against graphic media depictions drew the ire of several of the faculty. One complained that the phrase was subjective, and opened the door for attacks against professors; the respondent said that a PG13 version of *Hamlet* had been labeled pornographic the previous year, resulting in all kinds of rumors and exaggerations.²³ Concerns were expressed over the restriction of public statements. One member wrote that this violated one’s constitutional rights if a person were speaking outside the college.²⁴ Some complained that the college’s doctrinal statement had been imposed without input from the faculty.²⁵ There was a defeated tone in the response of one contributor who wrote that the survey deserved little comment since the board would ultimately do as it pleased, concluding “True education at LC cannot exist any longer. Only indoctrination remains.”²⁶ Those who offered positive feedback said little more than “good job.”

As the fall 2005 semester commenced, the new academic freedom policy was firmly in place, and it would only be a matter of time before its application would be tested. During the summer of that year, President Aguiard appointed two vice

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid., 17.

²³ Ibid., 4.

²⁴ Ibid., 17.

²⁵ Ibid., 19.

²⁶ Ibid., 20.

presidents who would assist him in enforcing the redefined academic freedom policy. Charles Quarles who served as vice president for the integration of faith and learning and chair of religious studies gave a chapel speech in early November that illustrated the conflict brewing between the faculty and the new administration.²⁷ In his speech, Quarles critiqued post-modernism and its insistence upon subjective truth, and argued that for Louisiana College Jesus was the most valuable professor and the Bible the most important textbook, the one that trumped all others.²⁸

Quarles said that some had suggested that professors at Louisiana College should present all ideas to students, and let them choose the answer they deem best, never advocating for one position over another.²⁹ For him, this model of education was akin to naïve relativism, not indoctrination as the critics of the new Louisiana College suggested.³⁰ To those who said that advocating for certain positions and beliefs threatened the college's academic reputation, Quarles asked why Baptists should invest millions of dollars on an education that did not differ from what was offered at state schools.³¹ And to those who worried that the college's new commitment to Christian truth meant that competing ideas and ideologies could not be presented fairly and real education could not occur, Quarles suggested that the classrooms at Louisiana College were "home fields to Christian truth," that opposing ideas were welcome to compete, but

²⁷ Charles Quarles, "The Integration of Faith and Learning at Louisiana College," typescript of a chapel address, Pineville, Louisiana, November 3, 2005.

²⁸ Ibid., 2.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 4

in the end Christian truth would prevail because it is best.³² In concluding, Quarles said that those who argued that the college's founders were rolling over in their graves because of the change in direction were wrong, that he was convinced that they were smiling upon the administration's efforts to integrate faith and learning.³³

The Quarles speech was indicative of the administration's expectation for faculty to deal with subjects, ideas, and philosophies that fell outside the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*. It was not a situation in which most controversial topics were off limits. The faculty were expected, however, to explain to students why the position of Southern Baptists was best. This was fully disclosed in a lengthy dialog between Fred Downing and Connie Douglas and the administration over the use of Scott M. Peck's *The Road Less Traveled*.

After the fall semester ended, Glenn Sumrall, the new vice president for academic affairs, wrote Downing and Douglas, informing them that *The Road Less Traveled* was not approved for use in spring 2006.³⁴ Sumrall's letter detailed a process that dated back to September 30, when the book was discussed at a religion faculty meeting. During October, Downing and Quarles had discussed the book, and then communicated in writing over the book's content and how it would be used.³⁵ Ultimately, Quarles did not support the use of the book, and Sumrall agreed with his decision, citing the book's loose

³² Ibid., 5.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Glenn Sumrall to Frederick Downing, December 17, 2005, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

³⁵ Ibid., 1.

suggestion that humans could achieve deification.³⁶ Sumrall said this was a direct contradiction to the teaching of the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.³⁷ He said that while he could support the inclusion of the Peck book if his views were presented by Downing and Douglas as “aberrant and antithetical to the LC mission and *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*,” Sumrall said that the professors had indicated that they did not critique the text.³⁸ He went on to suggest that the book was replete with statements and ideas conflicting with the college’s mission and its faith statement, and using it would conflict with Downing’s and Douglas’ commitment to teach in accordance with the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.³⁹

Professors Downing and Douglas filed a faculty grievance against Glen Sumrall on grounds that their academic freedom was violated.⁴⁰ The first grounds offered for the grievance was that “the action taken was in an untimely and inequitable manner.”⁴¹ It referenced that the decision was rendered on December 17, three days after the end of the fall semester, too late to replace a central textbook, a detail that not only burdened the faculty but was not in the best interest of the sixty students who were enrolled in the

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Connie Douglas and Frederick Downing to the Faculty Grievance Committee, “Faculty Grievance Against Chuck Quarles and Glenn Sumrall,” January 12, 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁴¹ Ibid., 1.

course.⁴² They also argued that the decision was not fair, as President Aguillard had made a public statement that the Koran was taught at Louisiana College, that he supported the teaching of controversial subjects, yet *The Road Less Traveled* was banned.⁴³

Next the professors suggested that Sumrall had misunderstood the nature of the course and drawn invalid conclusions. According to Downing and Douglas, the teaching method used in the course was structural analysis in which students explore the various stages and styles of moral development.⁴⁴ Sumrall, in their view, had confused this with theological analysis.⁴⁵ The professors wrote that their objective was not to teach theological precepts in the course, rather to scrutinize the thinking of various persons and groups.⁴⁶ Further, they argued that Sumrall had confused personnel matters with textbook matters by rejecting the book because he disapproved of its content.⁴⁷

Finally Downing and Douglas argued that they were not advocates for the views espoused in Peck's book, that they only advocated the book's use as a tool in stimulating students' thinking about the nature of values.⁴⁸ The pair mentioned that two academic

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

deans and an interim president had supported the book's inclusion.⁴⁹ Referencing comments made by President Aguillard that he supported the teaching of controversial topics so long as they were not advocated, they reasoned that was how they used Peck's book.⁵⁰ They asked the Faculty Grievance Committee to reinstate the book for use in spring 2006.⁵¹

On January 12, the Faculty Grievance Committee considered the matter.⁵² Sumrall was displeased that the matter was even considered and with the decision made by the committee.⁵³ He suggested that the committee had failed to follow the published procedures because Downing and Douglas did not meet with him to seek an informal resolution after he wrote them on December 17 and because their actual grievance was not fully disclosed until the hearing on January 12.⁵⁴ In spite of his displeasure Sumrall proposed mediation as a means to remedy the grievance, a suggestion of the committee.⁵⁵

On January 26, the mediation was held with a third party mediator and attorney, Steven Crews.⁵⁶ A few days later Sumrall wrote the Faculty Grievance Committee,

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Glenn Sumrall to Faculty Grievance Committee, memorandum, January 23, 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁵³ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid. 3.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Glenn Sumrall to Faculty Grievance Committee, memorandum, January 27, 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

indicating that *The Road Less Traveled* was approved for use under certain conditions. The conditions included the book be used as an ancillary reading, and that professors Downing and Douglas portray the text as “aberrant, morally and ethically abhorrent and antithetical to the mission of Louisiana College.”⁵⁷ Further, the professors were to contrast the author’s views with traditional Christian views and provide a critique of the book, “identifying and repudiating the book’s theological errors.”⁵⁸ The approval was pending the submission of a syllabus noting the provisions.⁵⁹

On January 30, President Aguiard wrote the Faculty Grievance Committee, informing them that the result of the mediation satisfied their recommendation and the dictates of the academic freedom policy.⁶⁰ As the final authority for interpreting the academic freedom policy, Aguiard declared the matter closed and that the process should be carried out within the “structure established by the committee and Sumrall.”⁶¹ A week later, Jim Crawford, professor of Spanish, wrote a letter to the Louisiana College faculty, informing them that he was resigning from the Faculty Grievance Committee.⁶² He indicated his resignation was due to the fact that the committee was just a formality for the college to satisfy SACS, and that President Aguiard had misrepresented the

⁵⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Joe Aguiard to Faculty Grievance Committee, e-mail, January 30 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA .

⁶¹ Ibid., 1.

⁶² Jim Crawford to Louisiana College Faculty, letter, February 7, 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

committee's recommendation in his January 30 letter.⁶³ Crawford said the committee had been relegated to a ceremonial role, only capable of making recommendations to the president, a process that in his mind prevented faculty from having recourse for addressing violation of their academic freedom.⁶⁴ He concluded that the administration was, in his opinion, unethical and dishonest, and that due process was dead.⁶⁵

Two days later, Bennett Strange, a professor of communication arts and chair of the Faculty Grievance Committee, wrote President Aguillard, to offer some clarification in light of his January 30 letter and campus rumors.⁶⁶ Strange wrote that the committee determined that Sumrall did violate Downing's and Douglas's academic freedom because the choice of books was a responsibility delegated to faculty members, but prescribed the mediation as a remedial attempt at resolving the matter because the committee recognized that final authority for approval of textbooks was ultimately up to the president.⁶⁷ Strange contended that the provisions required by Sumrall further violated the professors' academic freedom.⁶⁸ In conclusion, Strange said that the final resolution was not what the committee wanted.⁶⁹

⁶³ Ibid., 1.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Bennett Strange to Joe Aguillard, February 9, 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

The Downing-Douglas matter left little doubt as to how issues of academic freedom would be interpreted and decided. First, when it came to controversial topics or the tenets of another religious belief system included within a course textbook or topic, Louisiana College faculty members were required to contrast those tenets or critique those topics against the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*. Second, faculty committees, even those historically charged with guarding academic freedom, could do little more than offer a recommendation.

President Aguillard publicly addressed the college's view on academic freedom at a chapel address he gave on February 2.⁷⁰ He began his speech by noting that he was interested in all members of the college community "moving in the same direction, seeking the same goal, and using the same tools in achieving the mission."⁷¹ Aguillard said he knew that some within the community believed that truth was relative, and that there were many ways to God.⁷² So he moved to address the college's mission as a distinctively Christian institution.⁷³ After a lengthy discourse on the ills of postmodernism, President Aguillard said the college's position was that students should be exposed to all ideas, even those antithetical to the college's identity, but that these ideas must be juxtaposed against the "truth of the infallible and inerrant Bible."⁷⁴ He

⁷⁰ Joe Aguillard, "Identity and Mission of Louisiana College" typescript of chapel address, Pineville, Louisiana, February 2, 2006.

⁷¹ Ibid., 1.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., 2.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 10.

reasoned that this was a more enlightened education than secular institutions provided. Aguillard conceded that while some students might choose to believe and accept the ideas antithetical to the college's mission, it would not be without having heard the faculty share what "they knew to be absolutely true."⁷⁵ He warned that teaching about these ideas was not the same as "immersing students in theories through vicarious methods."⁷⁶ This seemed to be a direct reference to the methodology employed by Drs. Downing and Douglas. President Aguillard concluded that healthy debate was welcome at the college "when couched in biblical truth," and he argued that this was not indoctrination as critics suggested, rather a true model for education.⁷⁷

Between time the Downing-Douglas matter was concluding and President Aguillard's address, an interesting announcement appeared in *The Baptist Message*, the state Baptist paper. The Louisiana Inerrancy Fellowship (LIFe) announced that after eighteen years and two organizational names, the group was disbanding.⁷⁸ While the announcement did not have anything to do with Louisiana College, their rationale did. The group reported that its influences were no longer needed, given that every Louisiana Baptist entity, including Louisiana College, had an inerrantist for its executive, and that inerrancy had been written into the agencies' articles.⁷⁹ In just a little over a year as

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ "Announcement to all Louisiana Baptists from Louisiana Inerrancy Fellowship," in *The Baptist Message*, February, 2006, 4.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 1.

president, Joe Aguillard had proven to be effective in achieving LIFe's goals of upholding inerrancy and limiting academic freedom to the parameters of the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.

As the spring of 2006 unfolded, the administration took further action to get the faculty to comply with their vision for the college. The chief way this was achieved was through the re-writing of the faculty handbook. Charles Quarles, vice president for the integration of faith and learning, wrote a new section for the faculty handbook, titled "Christian Commitment."⁸⁰ The new policy stated that the college "must employ and retain only administrators and faculty who exemplify deep personal faith in Jesus Christ. The leaders and educators of Louisiana College must believe, think, teach, and live in a manner consistent with the Christian faith."⁸¹ This statement went further than some of the previous comments and policies that required faculty to teach in accordance with Baptist theology, as it called for compliance in belief and lifestyle. The policy included eight minimum requirements for those employed as either faculty or professional staff members. The first called for employees "to have accepted Jesus Christ as God, savior whose death was the sole means of atonement, and king who reigns over the lives of his disciples."⁸² The second and third required that an employee be able to articulate his or her faith and be an active member of a local church.⁸³ The fourth dealt with lifestyle,

⁸⁰ Charles Quarles, "Christian Commitment," policy draft, Pineville, spring 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

expecting employees to obey the golden rule, remain sexually pure outside of marriage, and practice personal integrity.⁸⁴ Further, employees were expected to refrain from using alcohol in public and in settings in which students were present or likely to be present.⁸⁵

The fifth requirement called for familiarity with the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* and teaching in compliance with its tenets.⁸⁶ The sixth and seventh points required faculty members to understand the college's mission and to integrate the Christian faith into their teaching and other educational activities.⁸⁷ The final policy requirement asked faculty members to attend chapel regularly, forbade meetings scheduled during chapel hour, and required attendance at special chapel services.⁸⁸

The new faculty handbook and the administration's definition of academic freedom were not well received by the majority of the faculty. In March, Thomas Howell, alumnus and professor of history at Louisiana College for four decades, announced he was leaving to take a post at William Jewel College.⁸⁹ Rather than go away quietly Howell agreed to an interview in which he said he was leaving because Louisiana College was moving away from education and toward indoctrination.⁹⁰ He

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ "Howell leaves Louisiana College, blasts creedalism," in *Mainstream Baptist*, March 26, 2006.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 1.

cited the requirements to teach in accordance with the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message* and the new Christian commitment policy in the faculty handbook as impositions to the faculty who were being asked to comply with a Baptist creed.⁹¹ Howell classified the movement at Louisiana College as an extension of the Southern Baptist Conservative Resurgence and said it was historically un-Baptist.⁹² He said Charles Quarles was the college's interpreter of the creed in case there was any doubt on one issue or another.⁹³

Faculty members who were planning to remain at Louisiana College took some action to stop the changes to the faculty handbook. The Faculty Grievance Committee sent a letter to SACS reporting that the committee charged with re-writing the faculty handbook was largely made up of trustees and administrators, and the only faculty involved were untenured and inexperienced in terms of academic governance.⁹⁴ The letter complained that this was evidence that shared governance at Louisiana College was only a memory, and cited the Downing-Douglas matter as illustrating that the administration would ignore committee recommendations and suppress academic freedom and due process.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid., 2.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Faculty grievance Committee to Rudolph Jackson, spring 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 1.

On March 17, the faculty passed a resolution decrying the process for changing the faculty handbook and the college's mission statement.⁹⁶ The faculty wanted to be a part of the process of reevaluating the mission statement because of its potential impact on long-range planning, and they wanted to participate in the discussion on changes to the college's committee structure to ensure that the changes had been thoughtfully considered.⁹⁷ The letter referenced that there was no known reason for completing the changes immediately.⁹⁸ The resolution concluded with a request to the board of trustees, asking them to postpone the process until their proposed conditions were met.⁹⁹

There is no evidence to suggest that SACS responded to the Faculty Grievance Committee's letter, and no action was taken against Louisiana College for the process or the changes. As President Aguiard's first full year as president concluded, a number of faculty members left for other jobs or retired. After nearly three consecutive years of fighting the changes at the college, the faculty was left to either accept the new model of academic governance or leave Louisiana College. A year later, *Inside Higher Ed* featured an article titled "Explaining an Exodus," in which several former faculty members and President Aguiard offered comments. Professor of communication arts Bennett Strange, who was retiring at the end of the year, said the count of faculty members who had left Louisiana College since the 2004-2005 academic year was forty-

⁹⁶ Louisiana College Faculty, resolution, March 17, 2006, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

nine out of seventy-one or sixty-nine percent.¹⁰⁰ Thomas Howell, who had left a year earlier, attributed the turnover to Aguillard's policies, again suggesting that education had been replaced by indoctrination.¹⁰¹ Aguillard said the changes reflected the college's realignment, that many of those who left did so because the new policy required teaching within the *2000 Baptist Faith and Message*.¹⁰² He insisted that they were not forced out but left on their own accord.¹⁰³

For Aguillard, the college had been returned to its roots, and he argued that Louisiana College was now firmly grounded in what it was born to be, a college that emphasized that "the Bible was truth without any mixture of error."¹⁰⁴ The article also referenced that faculty members near retirement age were being offered health coverage for life for themselves and their spouses if they retired by July 1, 2007. Indeed, the college did make such an offer to faculty members over the age of sixty with ten years of service who were willing to retire.¹⁰⁵ Those not willing to retire were not guaranteed that their spouses would be covered in the plan, and they would have to bear the burden of premium increases.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ "Explaining an exodus" in *Inside Higher Ed*, April 25, 2007.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 1.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ Benefits Agreement Offer, letter, January 30, 2007, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

For their part, Winbery, Downing, Heath, and Douglas, filed a second lawsuit, alleging that their 1997 settlement and the privileges afforded them had been violated by the Aguillard administration.¹⁰⁷ The case worked its way through the courts for the next seven years, but ultimately their claims of breach of academic freedom were rejected because the court decided that involving itself in the matter would require the court to interpret Baptist theology, a clear violation of the First Amendment.¹⁰⁸ None of the professors has been employed at Louisiana College since 2007.

In his defense, President Aguillard was merely a means for appeasing the conservatives within the Louisiana Baptist convention who wanted to return the college to its perceived roots: Holy Hill, where traditional beliefs and doctrines were upheld. He delivered the organizational changes required to limit academic freedom, and thus quell complaints that liberalism reigned at the convention's only institution of higher learning. Of course there is no way to prove that the college was ever "as holy a hill" as those who called for the changes suggested. Nevertheless perception matters a great deal, and the perception was that a return to holy hill was long overdue, and the perceivers enlisted President Aguillard to lead the march. One thing is clear: the return was costly in terms of human capital and academic freedom.

¹⁰⁷ Winbery v. Louisiana College, 9 La. 184, 363 (2012).

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 10.

CHAPTER X

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Conclusions

In the preceding chapters I have presented the history of Louisiana College during a period of eleven years in which external pressures from a faction within its sponsoring denominational body installed a president to redefine academic freedom to fit their views on morality and the role of an educational institution: to reinforce traditional values rather than challenge them. The change in direction altered the college's path, which had been moving the institution toward modern, progressive, and moderate Protestant views, toward fundamentalism.

The Louisiana College story is an embodiment of some of the debates over academic freedom during the early twentieth century when American academicians first questioned long-held assumptions about the origins of humankind and the Bible.¹ This is what George Marsden describes in his work on fundamentalism.² The difference, of course, is that the Louisiana College story plays out a century after most denominational colleges worked out their theology. But the themes are essentially the same: the inerrancy of the Bible, the origin of humankind, and traditional authorship.

¹ Timothy Cain, *Establishing Academic Freedom: Politics, Principles, and the Development of Core Values* (New York: MacMillan, 2012), 4, 7.

² George Marsden, *Fundamentalism and American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 9.

Willard Gatewood's collection of essays from the 1920s on the thinking of contemporary modernists and fundamentalists is helpful in understanding the positions of those who warred over the purpose of Louisiana College.³ Among those he includes in the modernist camp are Shailer Matthews and Harry Emerson Fosdick who viewed modernism as a method for preserving and promoting the values of Christianity. Their rivals, William Bell Riley, James M. Grey, and J. Greshem Machen, called these efforts an attack upon the Christian faith and classified the approaches of Matthews and Fosdick as unchristian.⁴

Robert Lynn and the faculty he recruited to teach during his presidency, 1975-1996, can be classified as liberal Protestants, much like those faculty members Jon Roberts describes in his work on the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who did not view the teaching of evolution or biblical higher criticism as a threat to their faith.⁵ Their papers and actions indicate that they were rather shocked to find the conservative evangelicals within the Louisiana Baptist Convention suggesting that their progressive views disqualified them from teaching at the college many of whom had devoted decades of service, much less that they were unchristian.

Robert Lynn and his faculty believed in a Christian college, but their definition of the institution was similar to William Rainey Harper's vision for The University of Chicago. They wanted to use modern scholarship and science as a means for promoting

³ Willard Gatewood, *Controversy in the Twenties: Fundamentalism, Modernism, and Evolution* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 10.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁵ Jon Roberts, "Conservative Evangelicals and Science Education, 1890-1940," *The Journal of the Historical Society* 3 (2005): 297-329.

the central values of Christianity.⁶ Like Harper, they feared that in light of modernism, Christianity, if left to its traditionalism, would become defunct as intelligent people would abandon it.⁷ Their insistence upon modern concepts of shared governance and academic freedom is evidence of a yearning to be taken seriously within the larger higher education community. Perhaps as Terry Lawrence argues, Robert Lynn and his faculty feared the stifling ability of their religious body.⁸ And maybe the little college on “Holy Hill” in Pineville had strayed from its initial religious convictions. Was this so bad if the initial convictions were outdated? As Lawrence also suggests, this was likely a means of financial survival because Louisiana College in the 1990s was not simply educating ministers as had been a primary purpose at its founding.⁹ The creation of new programs was as much about balancing operational budgets as filling niches.

Robert Lynn was an academic administrator, not a clergyman. Like the college presidents James Woodrow describes in his work on secularizing influences on Christian higher education, President Lynn was far more focused on the themes dominating larger liberal arts education than he was placating theological conservatives.¹⁰ But Robert Lynn’s Louisiana College was no University of California at Berkley on the Red River

⁶ Michael Lee, “Higher Criticism and Higher Education at the University of Chicago: William Rainey Harper’s Vision of Religion in the Research University,” in *History of Education Quarterly* 48, (2008): 508-533.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Terry Lawrence, “Philosophy, Religion and Education American Style: A Literature Review,” *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 16 (2007): 243, accessed June 4, 2013. doi:10.1090/1656210701650377.

⁹ Ibid., 253.

¹⁰ James Woodrow, “Institutional Image: Secular and Marketing Influences on Christian Higher Education,” *Christian Higher Education* 3 (2004): 119.

either. In terms of William Ringenberg's categories of Protestant colleges, Louisiana College in the mid-1990s through the mid-2000s was liberal Protestant.¹¹ Chapel was still a mandatory weekly event, although the sermons, often critiqued by Leon Hyatt and other conservatives, were more socially inspiring than supernaturally moving. And religion courses, Old and New Testament, were required for every student. Nevertheless it could be argued that the Christian emphasis was more of an add-on than a critical component.

James Hunter's work on American evangelicalism is a primer for understanding why ultimately the majority of those on the Louisiana College board of trustees saw a fundamental problem at Robert Lynn's Louisiana College. Lynn and his faculty's passivity to modernism and later post-modernism were unacceptable for a group that saw such progressive philosophies as a threat to Western civilization.¹² And they were unwilling to see the college go the way of so many other Protestant colleges that secularized as a result of internal or external forces.

In his work on evangelicalism Mark Noll describes a militancy that has been pervasive since the 1980s.¹³ This evangelical militancy insists upon culture change.¹⁴ Louisiana College under Robert Lynn and even later under Rory Lee was viewed as uncommitted to the cultural change the fundamentalists and evangelicals within the

¹¹ William Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 136.

¹² James Hunter, *American Evangelicalism* (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1983), 113.

¹³ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 9.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Louisiana Baptist Convention believed central to returning America to God and transforming Louisiana College back into the Holy Hill they believed it once was. Karen Armstrong's work on fundamentalism as a global phenomenon helps in understanding why this was critical for those who were demanding change.¹⁵ They viewed the changes in the culture as an attack upon their way of life that they believed to be pleasing to God, and failing to address the changes might mean God would remove his favor.¹⁶

The Southern Baptist higher education paradigm of the late 1900s was ripe for a battle over a college. The struggle over the seminaries, barely a decade old, gave the change agents a model for returning Louisiana College to its presumed roots. The century, dating back to the 1920s, was one of simmering strife. Arthur Farnsley's work on power struggles in the larger Southern Baptist Convention and his observation that many in Southern Baptist leadership were progressives in the 1960s and comfortable with the liberal views of the Bible espoused in the seminaries is helpful in understanding how Louisiana College, much in the same way that the seminaries had drifted from the vision Southern Baptists had for them, had slipped from Louisiana Baptists.¹⁷ The emergence of Leon Hyatt and what would become Speaking the Truth in Love and later The Louisiana Inerrancy (LIFe) parallels the emergence of figures in the struggle over the

¹⁵ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Random House, 2001), 233.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Arthur Farnsley, *Southern Baptist Politics: Authority and Power in the Restructuring of an American Denomination* (University Park, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 3.

seminaries.¹⁸ It is as if the parties were reading from the same playbook, and they likely were. Hyatt, the leader of the Louisiana saga utilized the same tactics as those utilized at the seminaries, chief among them using students' complaints about professors to draw the ire of the laity.¹⁹

Some could criticize President Robert Lynn for not seeking to free Louisiana College from the Louisiana Baptist Convention, to avoid the governance issues that would ensue. This assessment is barely fair, and would have likely been unsuccessful. Ralph Elliot, in writing about the seminaries, suggested that saving them from academic oppression would have taken a collective effort by all the institutions.²⁰ Louisiana College was a stand-alone institution that relied upon its state convention for twenty-percent of its operating budget, and so casting aspersions upon Lynn seems unfair given the college's financial constraints. Maybe the selection process for trustees could have been amended, but by the early 1990s conservative Southern Baptists within the Louisiana Baptist Convention would have recognized this for what it would have been: an effort to begin freeing the college from denominational control. And the critics of the proposed move could have pointed to the secularization of dozens of Protestant liberal arts colleges as an outcome. There is certainly evidence that by 2002 some on the board of trustees were interested in seeing the college become more like Union University to

¹⁸ Ibid., 17.

¹⁹ Ralph Elliot, *The Genesis Controversy and Continuity in Southern Baptist Chaos: A Eulogy for a Great Tradition* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1992), 42.

²⁰ Ibid, 27.

reverse the trend.²¹ Perhaps some even owned copies of James Burtchaell's work on colleges and universities that slipped away from their denominational bodies. His conclusions and suggestions that membership in the Council for Christian College and Universities was one way to remain true to denominational sponsorship were mentioned.²²

Others may find fault with his successor, Rory Lee, for capitulating to demands to remove *The Road Less Traveled* and a *Lesson Before Dying* from the bookstore in the fall of 2003. Lee had perhaps calculated that giving some to the conservative voices would quiet other demands. Put this way, Lee can be viewed in the same light as Robert Lynn. Both were doing their best given the circumstances. Louisiana College was the victim of circumstances that were far too complicated to be outmaneuvered by two competent leaders. The cliché in American politics that elections have consequences has meaning in Southern Baptist higher education. Trustees belonging to the conservative evangelical party have elected presidents like Joe Aguillard to narrow the definition of academic freedom to suit the group's demands. If anything, Robert Lynn and Rory Lee should be credited for delaying the trajectory for as long as they did. The changes wrought at Louisiana College, after all, came twenty-five years after the Southern Baptist Convention's Conservative Resurgence.

This leads to a question: is there a place for a Baptist college in modern higher education? Some will say yes, and some will answer no. Those who believe that higher education is a buyer's market contend that parents and students should be able to choose

²¹ Louisiana College Academic Affairs Committee, agenda and meeting notes, September 16, 2002, private collection of Frederick Downing, Valdosta, GA.

²² James Burtchaell, *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from their Christian Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 743.

the kind of education they receive, such that some ideas should be taught as truth and others as fallacy in these chosen institutions. This was much the argument made by Leon Hyatt and Joe Aguiard. It is uncertain whether all Louisiana College students really wanted an education that emphasized evangelical Christian truth over other religious and non-religious approaches to truth and truth-seeking. What is clear is that the Louisiana Baptist Convention wanted the former and ultimately had its way.

The concept of constituent-driven higher education is not unique to religious higher education. As referenced in the first chapter, the University of Nevada, under the leadership of Millard Stout during the 1950s, experienced pressure from business and local citizens to lower admissions standards and to implement new programs of study.²³ Stout yielded to this pressure and relied upon a top-down style of management that trampled upon developing academic governance.²⁴ His presidency is one example of a public university leader exercising great authority over faculty.

The current budgetary crisis in public higher education has arguably provided some legislators and administrators the opportunity to influence academic governance. In Louisiana, for example, deep cuts in state appropriations to higher education occurred between 2009 and 2013. At Louisiana State University and A&M College, the state's flagship university, state funds dropped from forty-percent of the university's operating budget to twenty-nine percent.²⁵

²³ J. Dee Kille, *Academic Freedom Imperiled: The McCarthy Era at The University of Nevada* (Reno, NE: The University of Nevada, Press, 2004).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁵ LSU Office of Budget and Planning. *Operating Budget Revenues* (Fall 2008; Fall 2013).

The Workforce and Innovation for a Stronger Economy (WISE) Fund was developed to offset the loss of appropriations.²⁶ The monies come with strings attached, requiring that the programs funded, faculty positions included, “support research and innovation and creativity that advances the economic and societal well-being of Louisianans.”²⁷ The degree programs also have to fill gaps in the current workforce and the institutions have to match twenty-percent of what is allocated.²⁸ The WISE plan calls for private investment in the fund, tying the allocation of additional resources to the production of graduates in high-demand job fields.²⁹ Intentional or not, this further impedes upon the authority long vested in faculty to determine what academic programs to offer.

There are more parallels to be drawn between Louisiana College and the contemporary debates about the role of academic freedom. Sandra Korn’s recent piece in the *Harvard Crimson* on the idea of academic justice over academic freedom is interesting if approached from the conservative Southern Baptist point of view.³⁰ She goes so far as to call for the expulsion of those within an academic community who propagate ideas that are in any way sexist, homophobic, or racist because these are the

²⁶ “About WISE,” WISE Plan, accessed November 12, 2014, <http://wiseplan2014.com/about/>

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Sandra Korn, “The Doctrine of Academic Freedom,” *Harvard Crimson*, February 18, 2014.

very ideas that said institutions oppose.³¹ Of course this is not necessarily the case at a Baptist college. In fact, quite the contrary, many within the conservative evangelical world find liberal views of the Bible and progressive views on sexuality to be contrary to their interpretation of the Bible and, by extension, their goals for society. These proponents are the very ilk that moved to expel the moderates on the Louisiana College faculty because permitting them compromised their vision for Louisiana College.

Contrast Korn's views with those of conservative Patrick Deenen and one nearly finds an endorsement of the tactics used by the conservatives on the Louisiana College board of trustees, for Deenen credits academic freedom as a force in the destabilization of religious institutions.³² He later backs away and offers a more balanced answer that most religious universities permit faculty to speak their minds on given topics, even with respect to issues on which the faculty and the sponsoring body happen to disagree.³³ This was the world of Louisiana College prior to when the Southern Baptist Convention's Conservative Resurgence began to influence and in the words of the conservatives "rein in" the institutions. In short, Korn's proposed tactics are not dissimilar to those of Deenen. He suggests that few campuses have any conservative voices remaining among the faculty ranks, as the campuses have been populated with persons who share liberal views.³⁴ Deenen reasons that most of those who teach in religious institutions choose to

³¹ Ibid.

³² Patrick Deenen, "What's Wrong with Academic Freedom?" *The American Conservative*, March 5, 2014.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

do so, embracing the institution's view because they share them.³⁵

While this may be true at Catholic colleges (which he uses as his examples of a religious institution), Catholic higher education does not, in general, have the same requirements for faculty positions that some of the Protestant colleges have adopted, especially Baptist ones that have been forced to align with the conservative views held by Southern Baptist leaders in the modern era.³⁶ David Horowitz's Academic Bill of Rights purports to be an answer to the dominance of liberalism in higher education. It really has no implication in the Southern Baptist higher education paradigm. In large part, Horowitz speaks from the orientation of a small (but influential) segment of higher education (highly selective, elite colleges and universities, public and private), most that at one time or another had substantial Christian affiliations, but no longer do today. The principles in Horowitz's slant all forbid bias as a test for hiring faculty; clearly, in the case of the Southern Baptist seminaries and Louisiana College, hiring deference has been given to Southern Baptists and a number of statements of faith, essentially credos, have been required to vet would-be faculty. Horowitz does call for private universities with religious affiliation to be explicit in these restrictions.³⁷ And the Academic Bill of Rights' requirements for exposure to an array of perspectives without endorsing one as truth conflicts with the model of education adopted at Louisiana College since 2006.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Daniel McNery, "Hiring for Mission at Catholic Colleges and Universities." Center for the Advancement of Catholic Higher Education, accessed November 25, 2014, <http://www.cardinalnewmansociety.org/Portals/0/CENTER/Hiring%20for%20Mission%20at%20Catholic%20Colleges%20and%20Universities.pdf>

³⁷ David Horowitz. "Academic Bill of Rights," accessed September 24, 2014, <http://studentsforacademicfreedom.org/documents/>

Opportunities for Further Research

While the Louisiana College story provides insight into what happens when a college falls prey to an overreaching conservative board of trustees, the experience of other Baptist colleges that separated themselves from such elements merits inquiry. The same year that President Joe Aguillard secured new academic freedom policies at Louisiana College designed to appease the Louisiana Baptist Convention, William Crouch, president of Georgetown College, located in Georgetown, Kentucky, was leading his college to disassociate from the Kentucky Baptist Convention.³⁸ For Crouch and for Georgetown College, an agreement was reached in 1987 that gave either party the power to end the relationship.³⁹ The tipping point for Crouch was the pressure to appoint conservative religion faculty, the same notion made by Leon Hyatt and conservative Louisiana Baptists in 1995.⁴⁰ Crouch indicated that he was worried that the college could become secular because of the split, going the way of other colleges that shed their religious affiliations.⁴¹ It would be worth exploring the religious and spiritual identity of Georgetown College to see what changes have occurred since separating from the Kentucky Baptist Convention.

A number of other Baptist colleges have gone the way of Louisiana College in recent years, most notably Shorter College, located in Rome, Georgia. The experience of Shorter College is unique in that Shorter fought for its independence but was finally

³⁸ Alan Finder. "Feeling Strains, Baptist Colleges Cut Ties," *New York Times*, July 22, 2006.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

quelled by a court order. Until 2001, Shorter selected its own trustees, but that year then president Ed Shrader was told that the Georgia Baptist Convention would begin handpicking the board of directors and demanded that the college replace its moderate religion faculty with conservative scholars.⁴² In 2002, the sitting trustees voted to sever ties with the convention and refuse its annual financial contribution which amounted to four percent of the operating budget.⁴³ The issue ultimately landed in the Georgia Supreme Court in 2005 whereby in a 5-4 decision the justices sided with the Georgia Baptist Convention. Shorter's attempt to become more independent of its state convention was thwarted.⁴⁴ The next several years were reasonably calm, although the college did begin requiring a written faith statement and joined the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities.⁴⁵ The selection of Donald Dowless as president in 2011 was followed by the adoption of a conservative statement of faith and a list of lifestyle expectations required of faculty, staff, and students that forbids public drinking, accepting homosexuality, and engaging in premarital sex.⁴⁶ The aftermath of the changes wrought at Shorter College aimed at getting it back its biblical principles resulted in the loss of eighty-three members of the faculty and administration, including one-third of all full-

⁴² Libby Nelson, "A Cultural Change Tears a Georgia Baptist College Apart," *Inside Higher Ed*, November 14, 2012.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

time faculty members, in nine months.⁴⁷ And like Louisiana College, Shorter College was put on probation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.⁴⁸ Dowless has said, as Aguillard did, that the college is on the verge of its best days now that it is firmly aligned with its sponsoring church and principles.⁴⁹ Future research might explore the behind the scenes maneuvering that preceded the changes at Shorter and compare them to what happened at Louisiana College.

Personal Perspective

The completion of this study coincides with the ten year anniversary of my graduation from Louisiana College. My experience there as a student, both in terms of the academic challenges and the drama that ensued as the trustees fought the faculty over academic freedom, has had the most profound impact upon my life. It was probably my first encounter with power plays. This study's coverage of Robert Lynn's presidency which preceded my time at Louisiana College has also been beneficial. I have come to appreciate the college more as a result of studying his papers and those of the faculty he hired. I think Lynn was an effective president, and I credit his leadership with giving Louisiana College the reputation that drew me there as a student. But in the end the most valuable lesson from both my experience as a student at Louisiana College and as a student of a troubled period of its history is that institutions are fragile. The actions of a single leader or a few trustees can undo in a few years what took others decades to build.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

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